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The Magnitude and Causes of Dropout in Malawi: A Study of Chiradzulu District

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THE MAGNITUDE AND CAUSES OF DROPOUT IN MALAWI: A STUDY OF
CHIRADZULU DISTRICT

BY

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A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
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ABSTRACT

Dropout is one of the problems many public education systems face all around the world. In Malawi, the problem worsened after 1994 when primary education was made free and an influx of children came into the system. Soon after, the children started to quit. It is estimated that about 10 per cent of the children who were enrolled into primary school that year dropped out during the first six months of the school year. This trend is still going on, sometimes with as little as 25 percent completion rate (to the last class of the cycle).

The study sought to provide an overview of the magnitude and possible causes of the problem in a district south of the country, in the light of literature available on the topic from within and outside Malawi. The study examined five schools in the district in terms of enrollment and dropout trends. It also administered a questionnaire to drop out as well as in-school children. Lastly the survey interviewed parents who have children who dropped out and Head teachers of the five schools.

Generally, poverty, which in this case comprise lack of food, good clothes and personal care and small school items top the chart in terms of causes. Handling of children by teachers comes second. School infrastructure, much as it is emphasized in other studies, did not come up as an important factor in this case. Again, despite much speculation on the potential of HIV/AIDS as a factor of the poverty in the area, the study did not have enough information to establish the link between HIV/AIDS, poverty and therefore, drop out. Perhaps it is an area that requires a different inquiry altogether. There was also little evidence for the speculation that children drop out of school to look after their sick relatives.

Government intervention initiatives to reduce the impact of poverty, intensive teacher professional development initiatives as well as revitalization of policy communication systems are forwarded as recommendations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For this study to be possible, it took more than just my effort. A lot of other people's effort and time have also been involved in making this project a success. However, due to the fact that they are many, it would almost be impossible to mention these people individually. This, nevertheless, does not demean their invaluable contribution to the study. Instead, it should be born in their minds that as long as this report is there, their kind assistance, in any and every aspect of the process of its compilation, will always be cherished.

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I thank all the teaching staff as well as the student body of the Center for International Education of the University of Massachusetts for all the wisdom I have gained through my interaction with them, much of which found its way into the final product of this study. Special thanks to Dr. Eugene Gonzalez for assisting in the inception of the study as well as in questionnaire and interview schedule formulation. More thanks

are due to Dr. Khehla Dhlovu (currently in Malawi) for his guidance during data collection and analysis.

My gratitude should go to the following Head teachers: Mr. S. Mahala of St. Michael's school, Mr. W. Chilomoni and his deputy Mrs. S. Makoko of Matenjere school, Mr. L. Kabisa (deputy) of Lisao school, Mr. P. Mukowa of Mbombwe school, Mr. B. Sapuwa of Goleka school and Mr. A. Mwangonde of Chiradzulu school (where questionnaires were proofread and some tried). All teachers and pupils in these schools, as well as all out of school children and parents who sacrificed their time to participate in the study, should accept my gratitude.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Nellie and daughter Beatrice for their tremendous support in typing as well as all their moral support during the project as well as their patience during the entire period of my absence from home.

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Chapter 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter introduces the research project, describing the context and setting of the problem as well as defining it and stating how the study intends to go about investigating it. It provides the questions the research is trying to answer and it also states the significance of carrying out the study.

1.2 Background to the problem

The standing controversy on the role of education in development is finally coming to an end with countries realizing the impact education has on the process. Taking it from the many developed countries that have benefited from education, many developing countries are taking strides towards promotion of education as a tool for development. However, most of the countries are faced with numerous challenges that undermine their efforts.

Malawi, a southern African country, is not left out of the race. The government of Malawi regards education as one of the most important areas that requires utmost attention. It actually puts education at the center of development. As such, a lot of effort is given to the sector ranging from remarkable budgetary allocations to formation and implementation of policies that aim at giving all Malawians chances of getting quality education. Recently for example, the government declared primary education free as part of the efforts to see many Malawians acquiring a certain level of education. However, the

efforts are hampered by a lot of challenges, mostly economic, as the country is one of the poorest in the world. It is actually rated 162nd out of 175 countries of the world, counting from the most well off to the worst. The situation is made worse by the HIV/AIDS pandemic which cuts across all dimensions of life. The rest of the challenges are socio-cultural and professional. However, mostly, the challenges are linked in a cause and effect cycle whereby existence of one causes existence of others.

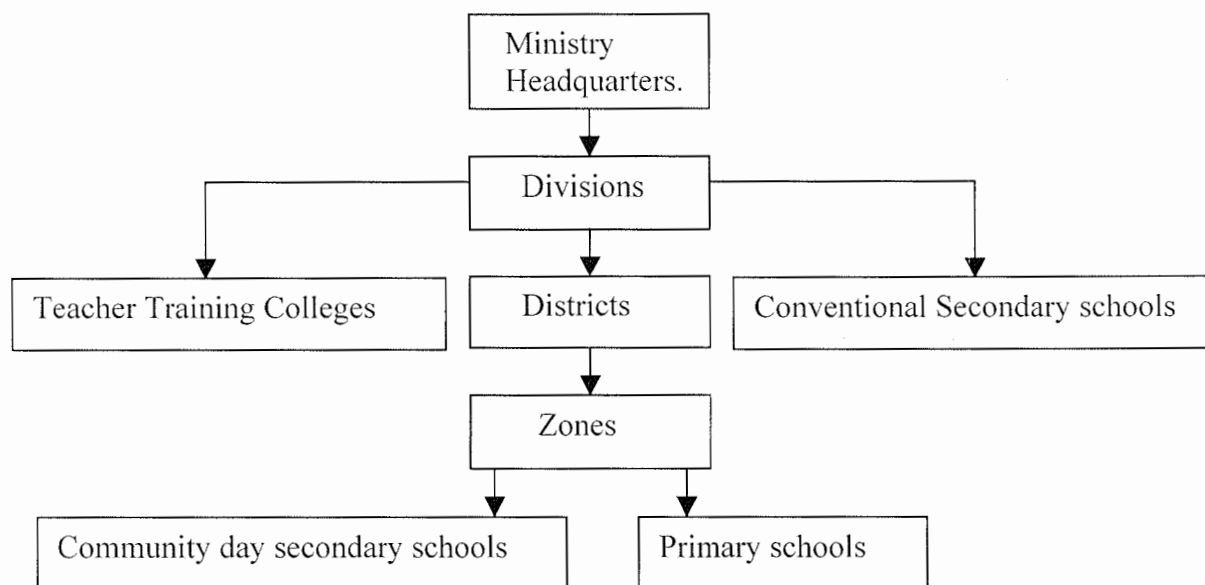
The research therefore sets out to investigate one of the challenges, namely drop out at primary school, which statistics have shown to be getting to worrisome heights. Many children get into standard one every year but class enrollments get smaller as grades go up. The UNICEF Malawi situation report estimates drop out at 12 percent. (UNICEF, 2003) The trend is retrogressive to the free primary education policy in that, despite the high cost of such a policy in such a poor economy, the returns, be they social or private, will be unacceptably minimal if children do not complete the primary education cycle. The research will attempt to bring to light the extent of the problem, explore possible causes and, where possible, draw suggestions as to what can be done to mitigate the situation.

Though the problem is national, the research confines itself to Chiradzulu, a district in the southern region of the country, singling out a few schools and their communities in two zones.

In Malawi, education is organized in a four-tier structure system. In the first tier is the Ministry headquarters. The second tier comprises Divisions, which are six in total. The third tier comprises Districts, Teacher training Colleges and conventional Secondary schools. The fourth tier comprises the Zones. Normally, Districts have anything between

six and fifteen zones. The last tier comprises Community day secondary schools and Primary schools. See figure 1.

Figure 1



Chiradzulu is one of the four districts that make up The Shire highlands division. The district shares boundaries with Blantyre district (of the Southwest Division) to the south and southwest, Zomba district (of the Southeast Division) to the north and northwest and Phalombe, Mulanje and Thyolo districts (of the Shire Highlands Division) to the northeast. Chiradzulu has eight Zones (with six teacher development centers), three Conventional secondary schools, twenty-three Community Day secondary schools and eighty-five primary schools. The district also houses one Teacher training college and a special needs education center.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In pursuit of universal primary education goals, as declared by The United Nations and echoed at world education forums in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, many nations, mostly developing, are declaring primary education in their countries free in order to get every child in school by the year 2015. Malawi, a Sub-Saharan developing nation, is no exceptional. Upon embracing democracy in 1994, after three decades of dictatorship, the president elect declared primary education free, fulfilling one of his election campaign pledges. The declaration was welcomed with increased enthusiasm by parents by sending their children to school.

The overwhelming response to free primary Education (FPE) by parents and their children strongly suggested that fees and uniform (which were abolished) had been barriers to schooling. It could only be expected, then, that enrollment figures would either be growing, or at least keep constant for sometime. To the surprise of many, 300,000 children dropped out of school in the first six months of free primary education. (Ministry of education & UNICEF. 1998. p.24). The trend is continuing with fluctuating enrollment figures across years (see table 1). There are worrisome drop out rates, coupled with persistent absenteeism. Visiting the rural areas of the country, one cannot escape the sight of children along the roads, in the fields or around their households at the time when they are supposed to be in school. One umbrella question that emerges out of this situation is: *What is causing pupils to drop out of school ?*

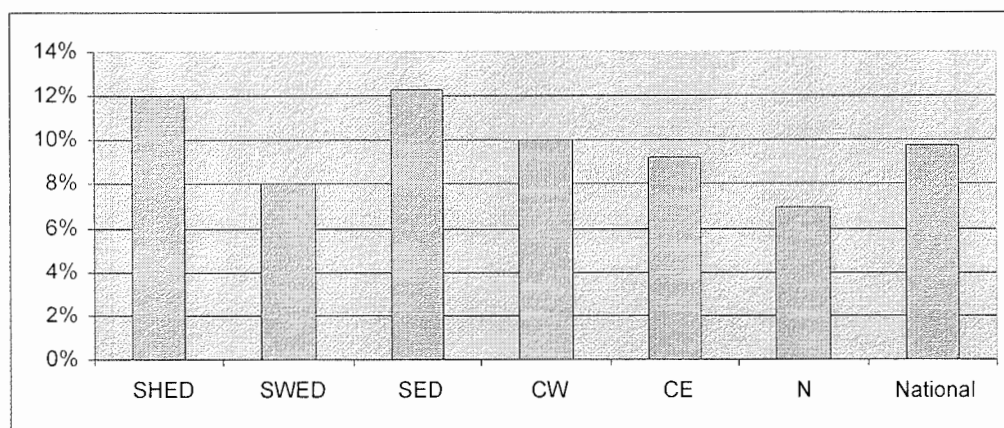
1.2.1 Magnitude of the problem

The problem of drop out is one of the major challenges facing the education sector in Malawi. Many analysts such as Kadzamira (2003) put it as one of the drawbacks of Free Primary Education policy. According to UNICEF the national drop out rate in 2002 was estimated at 12% of the total school population. (UNICEF 2003). Currently, Asia is leading in school drop out where rates go as high as 45,47 and 53 % in Burma, Laos and India respectively (UNESCO quoted by BBC, 2004). According to The European Association for Education of Adults (2004), the average drop out in Europe is 20%. Malawi could therefore be considered better off. However, these are annual drop out rates, When a single cohort is tracked down to the last class, the results are terrible. For example, for Malawi, out of the 1.2 million children who started school in 1994, only 300,000 got to the final class (after eight years). (Ministry of education, 2002). What it means here is that between 1994 and 2002 (stds 1-8), 75% of the cohort dropped out. In absolute figures, 900,000 children dropped out before reaching standard 8. This roughly agrees with the year 2000 drop out rate (rounded at 10%), which, when multiplied by eight years, gives us 80%, which is not far away from the 75% got by using the actual figures.

From the Ministry of education statistical publication, *Education Basic Statistics* (2000), a summary of the situation is presented starting from national through divisional and district to the school level. At national level, according to the 2000 data, the average drop out rate for that year was 9.8%. Distribution ranged from 7% in the northern region to 12% in the south. (See figure 2). Compared to the 2003 rate, which is put at 12%,

(UNICEF 2003), it can be said that in Malawi, drop out is a growing problem worth of attention.

Figure 2 National distribution of annual drop out rates by division in 2000.



SHED = Shire Highlands division

SED = South East division

CE = Central East division

SWED = South West division

CW = Central West division

N = Northern division

Table 1a. Enrollment and drop out in the year 2000

Enrollment			Drop out				
Boys	Girls	Total	Dropout by gender		Dropout by section		Total drop out
			Boys	Girls	Stds 1-4	Stds 4-5	
1,558,062 (52%)	1,458,910 (48%)	3,016,972 (100%)	152900 (50.6%)	149008 (49.4)	232885 (77%)	65023 (23%)	301908 (100%)

Table 1b. gender specific enrollment and drop out

Gender	Enrollment	Drop out	%
Boys	1,558,062	152900	9.8
Girls	1,458,910	149008	10.2

Out of the total national drop out, 50.6% are boys and 49.4% are girls. Here it means that there are more boys dropping out than girls. To make matters worse, out of all the girls enrolled in 2000, 10.2% dropped out while as 9.8% of the total boys enrolled the year did so. Here it means that the girl population in the schools is reducing at a higher

rate than that of boys. Only 89.8% of the total number of girls enrolled survived that year, while for boys, it was 91.1%. Drop out is higher in lower classes than it is in higher classes. In 2000, out of the total national drop out, 77% came from children in standards 1 and four. Only 23% was from standards 5 to 8. (For crude figures, refer to tables 1a and 1b).

At Division level, the situation was examined by district. Out of the four districts that make up the Shire Highlands Division, Chiradzulu had the lowest drop out rates at 9.3 % of the 2000 annual division drop out total. The highest was Phalombe, which shares boundaries with Chiradzulu to the northwest at 16.2%. (See figure 3). On the overall, boys constituted 48.9% of the total division drop out, while girls made up about 51%. Again, like the national scenario, gender specific enrollment and drop out revealed that girls dropped out at a higher rate (12.6%) than boys (11.7%). Children from lower classes, that is from standard 1 to 4 dropped out more (78.8 %), than those from standard 5 to 8 (21.2%). (for crude figures, see table 2).

Figure 3

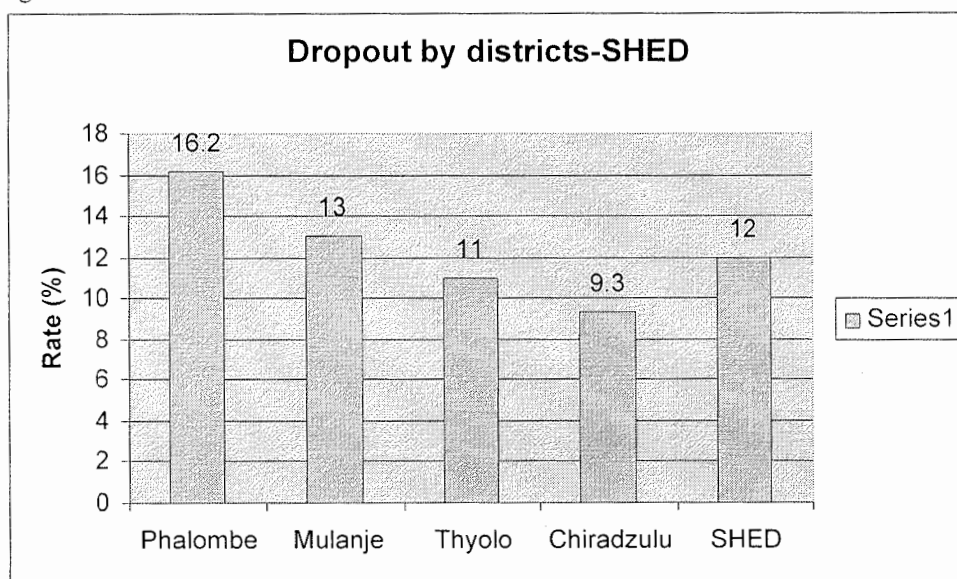


Table 2

Enrollment				Drop out			
429144				52062			
Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
221109		208035		25926		26136	
Std 1-4	Std 5-8	Std 1-4	Std 5-8	Std 1-4	Std 5-8	Std1-4	Std 5-8
157273	63836	157061	50974	20873	5053	20144	5992

At district level, the trend is mostly similar to those of the national and division levels. Girls are more disadvantaged than boys in that though mostly boys enrollment is higher than that of girls (though the gap is lately drastically closing, more so at division and district levels), it is girls who are leading in drop out both in percentage to total dropout as well as in gender specific percentage (rate) (see figure 4). Like FAWE (2000) observes, more boys than girls drop out in the junior section and more girls than boys drop out in the senior section. Again, lower classes (Std 1-4) lose more children (74% of stds 1-4 enrollment) than do Standards 5 to 8 (26% of stds 5-8 enrolment) (see table 3).

Figure 4 Drop out by gender as a % of total district drop out and as % to gender specific enrollment.

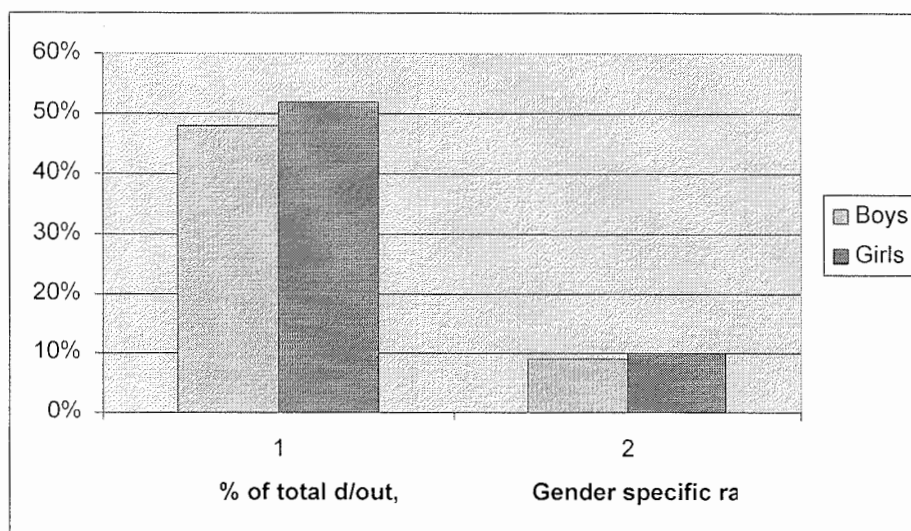


Table 3 District enrollment and drop out

Enrollment				Drop out			
81552				7619			
Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
Std 1-4	Std 5-8	Std 1-4	Std 5-8	Std 1-4	Std 5-8	Std1-4	Std 5-8
28265	13676	28002	11609	2830	842	2825	1122

Some crude cohort tracking was done in three of the five schools (those that had some of the necessary data) in an attempt to establish completion and drop out rates.

The cohort chosen is the 1997/2004 one (8 years). The exercise was not easy because it was discovered that the schools did not have adequate records of enrollments across the years. Missing again were figures on transfers, repetition and other related information.

One school, Mbombwe, was examined for its gender disparity in terms of enrollment and drop out over the period of eight years. Out of the 121 boys and 123 girls who enrolled in standard 1, only 32 boys and 21 girls made it to standard 8 (plus about 10% transfers and repetition).

Table 4
Mbombwe F.P. school

	Boys	Girls
Std 1 (1997)	121	123
Std 3 (1999)	88	86
Std 5 (2001)	40	44
Std 6 (2002)	49	33
Std 7 (2003)	32	30
Std 8 (2004)	32	21

The difference between enrollment at entry in standard 1 (1997) and that of standard 8 (2004) is 191. This is 78% of the enrollment at standard 1. This is roughly attributed to drop out. However, it should be born in mind that a percentage of the figure would be attributed to transfers and repetition. This is done to paint a rough picture of the situation. Unavailability of data made it impossible to isolate the transfer and repetition factors.

However, comparing this percent figure with that of the 1994-2000 cohort, which is 75%, and is calculated from hard data, one concludes that the percentage for repetition and transfers is not all that big. In this case 78% minus 75% gives us 3%, which can roughly be attributed to transfers and repetition. Figure 5 depicts the flow of pupils from standard 1 in 1997 to standard 8 in 2004. This pattern is almost the same every year, which also suggests that repetition is constant and low.

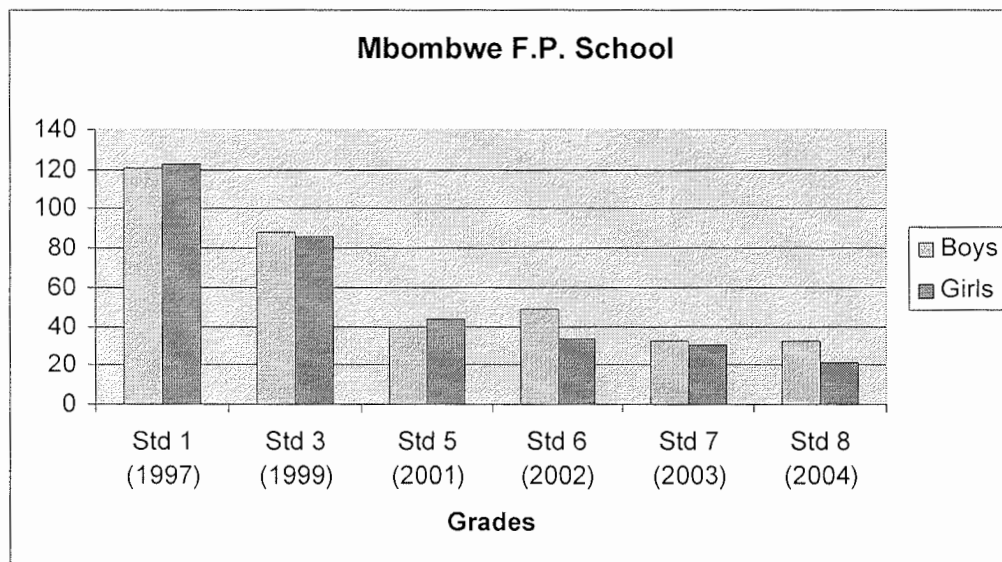


Figure 5 Enrollment against grades at Mbombwe school.

The trend is identical in all the three schools. The first class registers very high figures, which, however, start dwindling right in the second class, getting to as low as one fifth in the eighth grade. The highest drop out happens between standards 1 to 4. Again, there are more girls dropping out, repeating (and transferring out) than there are boys. (See figure 6 and table 5).

Figure 6

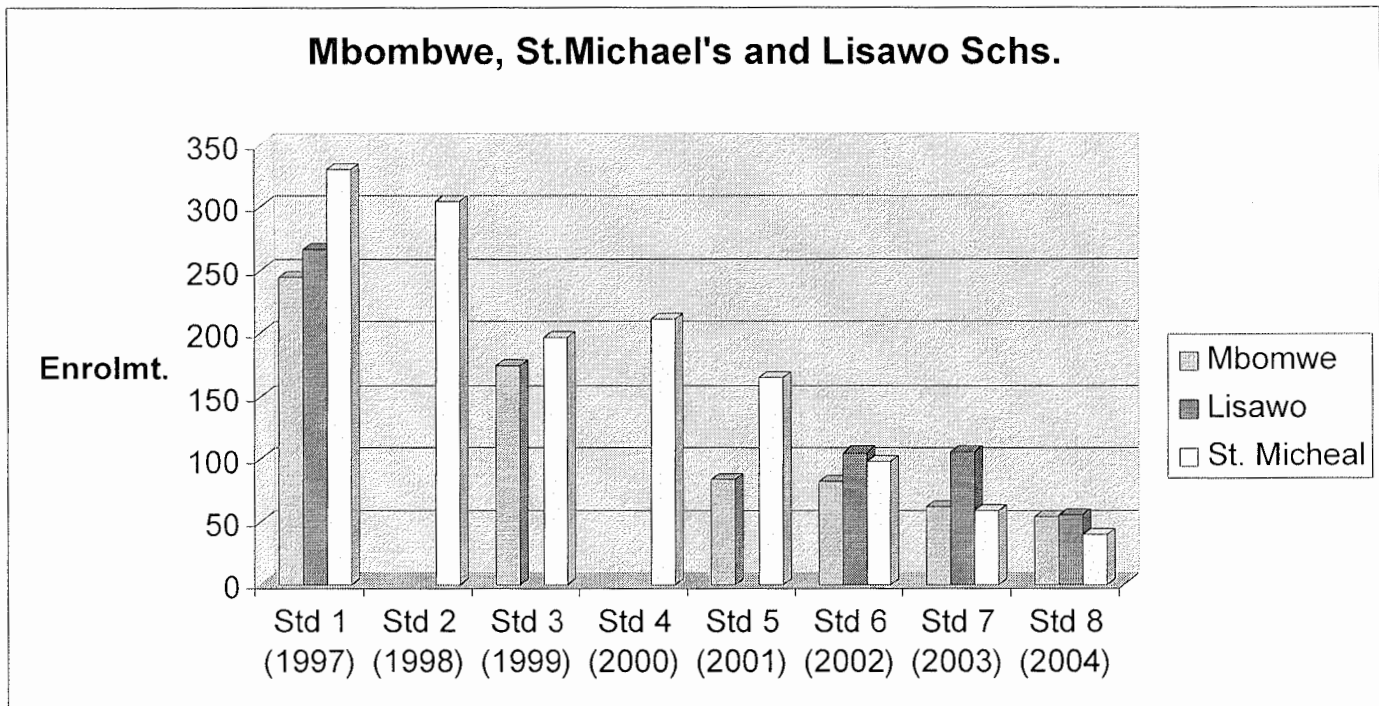


Table 5

	Mbombwe	Lisawo	St. Micheal
Std 1 (1997)	244	267	330
Std 2 (1998)			304
Std 3 (1999)	174		197
Std 4 (2000)			211
Std 5 (2001)	84		164
Std 6 (2002)	82	105	98
Std 7 (2003)	62	106	58
Std 8 (2004)	53	55	39

The problem of drop out is a serious one at all levels of the system. Though the data to support this claim may look scanty, the absolute figures for the year 2000 substantiate it and also supplement the district data.

1.3 Purpose of the study

This research sets out to investigate the extent of the problem of dropout and its possible causes in Chiradzulu district, and how the problem can be sorted out. As studies

such as FAWE (2000) have shown that drop out is a nation wide problem, the question can be regarded as binding nationally. However, this study intends to focus on a few schools and their communities in a single district of the country and come up with the answer at that level.

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 Main research question

To investigate causes to the inability of the primary school system to retain pupils to the end of the cycle, the study is actually searching for an encompassing answer to the following larger question; *Why are children dropping out of school before reaching the final class of the cycle in Chiradzulu district?*

1.4.2 Specific research questions

Based on what has been what studies have found elsewhere, the bigger research question is broken down into the following smaller hypothetical questions that seek to investigate the problem to detail;

1. How big is the drop out problem in Malawi?
2. Does distance to school contribute to drop out?
3. Does clothing play a role on whether children continue with or quit school?
4. Does lack of food contribute to drop out?
5. Is the way teachers handle children a factor of drop out?
6. Is school physical environment a contributing factor to drop out?
7. How does socio-economic status of children contribute to whether they remain in school or drop out?

8. How does HIV/AIDS and orphanage contribute to the drop out?
9. What potential is there in the schools for more dropouts?

1.5 Significance of the study

The study would contribute to the success of the free primary education program as it would be addressing one of the issues that hamper its progress. The then State President, Bakili Muluzi was quoted as saying that free primary education is generally perceived as an effective means to a universal education, a tool for fighting illiteracy in order to achieve poverty alleviation goals, and poverty alleviation is backbone to the overall development policy plan in Malawi. (Ministry of Education and UNICEF, 1998. p iii.).

1.6 Hypotheses

For children to be enrolled and stay in school, much more is needed than just making it free. If other factors that affect the totality of the well being of the child are not favorable, it is likely that those children who get enrolled into school by the mere fact that it is free may soon realize the many challenges on the way. The challenges may soon overshadow the attraction the free school provides, resulting into absenteeism and eventually drop out. Based on the above questions, the following hypotheses will be investigated:

1. The problem of drop out is big in Malawi
2. Distance to school contributes to drop out.
3. Lack of food contributes to drop out.
4. Poor clothes contribute to children's drop out
5. Poor school environment contributes to drop out.

6. Poverty contributes to drop out.
7. Ill health and death of guardians contribute to drop out.
9. Poor pupil management practices by teachers contribute to drop out.
10. There is danger that more pupils will drop out from the schools.

These hypotheses are partly drawn from what other authors have said on the topic as well as personal observation and experience of the problem. It is the task of this study to prove them valid or not for the Chiradzulu situation.

The chapter has really opened the door to the study by exposing the problem under study, the objective of the study and the basic plan with which the problem is going to be investigated. The proceeding chapter will review some of the literature available on the topic or related topics.

Chapter 2

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter looks at what research has been conducted in the area of dropout or related areas. School wastage and school efficiency have been areas of attraction both for the professionals as well as politicians as it is widely believed that an effective education system contributes to national development. As such, many authors have worked in this area and there is quite a good deal of publication around it. However, a selected few will be reviewed to provide ground for take off for the current study.

2.2 The literature

Kadzamira, E and Rose, P (2003) gather data that they use to analyze the progress of Fee Primary Education (FPE) policy in Malawi. In brief, they find that hidden costs of going to school - costs of learning materials, clothing and also the opportunity costs of sending children to school - are contributing to the retrogressive effect of the FPE, characteristics of which include high drop out. They also cite poor school environment; inadequate and less competent teachers; and poor or lack of classrooms. These, they claim, are foundations for poor quality school environment, and hence poor internal efficiency, whereby children are failing to perform expected outcomes after a particular period of exposure to teaching and learning. These factors result in repetition in grades and the frustration it brings to children, who may then decide just to drop out. Disparities between rural and urban, the rich and the poor, and between male and female are also

found to be potential setbacks to FPE in Malawi. The two authors conclude by asserting that FPE will not succeed as a poverty alleviation tool if no appropriate interventions are sought to sort out these shortfalls. Kadzamira and Rose are well known education field researchers in Malawi. In this particular study, it appears they make use of readily available data from their own previous studies, or from other people's work and documents available in the system.

Mc Jessie- Mbewe (2002) agrees with Kadzamira and Rose. He firstly observes that FPE had actually raised enrolments tremendously. He however notes the drop out soon after and persistently thereafter. He also notes the poor quality of education our schools are offering. He attributes the situation to poor school infrastructure, poorly trained or untrained teachers and geographical and gender imbalances. Fundamentally, he observes that, due to their inadequacy, little resources are spread thinly over a large number of pupils. Related to this, he mentions of hidden costs of education, which are a potential hindrance to schooling particularly in the Malawi economic situation. Like the first study, this is an analysis of information and data available on the subject rather than a field study.

In its article titled *Malawi: Focus on impact of poverty, AIDS on schooling*, written in 2002, an online organization called Science in Africa observes that the drop out problem is alarmingly high in Malawi. It quotes the then director of basic education in the Malawi ministry of education as saying out of the 1.2million enrolled in 1994, 900,000 had dropped out by 2002. This means only 300,000 of that cohort survived up to standard 8. At Ndirande LEA school alone, he continues, 1589 pupils enrolled in 1994 but only 349 of that group made it to standard 8 in 2002. According to the director, hidden costs of

education including opportunity cost is a major contributing factor. According to the organization, inadequate infrastructure that sees children overcrowding in the classrooms and more of them learning in the open, exposed to the elements compels children to drop out. It further states that many Malawians do not have enough food due to dry spells the country has been experiencing, and that HIV/AIDS is taking its toll on parents leaving large numbers of orphaned children. Ndirande LEA school alone had 2601 orphans. These, it contemplates, usually end up sex workers or small commodity sellers in the city. It suggests school feeding, which UNICEF had already started implementing in ten schools in the country by then, as one of the interventions required.

More interesting is a piece of research carried out in the United States in the mid sixties by Lucius Cervantes (1965) who observed that the country was experiencing a high rate of dropout. He found out that such factors as the family of the drop out, peer pressure, culture and school experiences were central to the problem. Most interestingly, most of his dropouts were from low-income families but their dropping out had nothing to do with lack of school fees and other financial support. In the family, issues like instability, lack parental love and concern, and lack of a sense of togetherness in general were crucial to the child's attitude not only towards school alone, but also towards life as a whole. The lifestyles of the youth and their culture, practices in life such as making money, their sense of love, romance and marriage, gang life and other youth attractions influenced the child quite a lot.

Focus Adolescent Services, a United States youth counseling organization recognizes school drop out as a problem in the USA. It states various causes, some of which are: helping out their families (by sourcing supplementary income), marriages,

pregnancies, and failing in grades (classes). They associate dropouts with unacceptable social behaviors. Half of all prisoners, they say, are dropouts. As remedies, it suggests helping the children with their personal problems, giving chance to students who become pregnant to continue with school, and helping students make right choices in life.

In an analysis of the Indian FPE situation by the World Bank (1996), indications are that there is still work to be done. It indicates that despite education being free and compulsory, there are still many children out of school, and that drop out rate is very high especially in the rural areas. Girls seem to be affected more than boys. Some of the underlying causes being inadequate schools, inadequate teachers, inadequate and poor school facilities, poverty (national and individual) and others. India, however is trying to rectify these problems. Of special interest is the incentive package to pupils, which include free lunch, free uniform, scholarships to girls, and others. In a survey conducted by the Ministry of Education in Malawi, in collaboration with UNICEF, the very issues of poor or lack of classrooms, shortage and poor caliber of teachers, poverty, and socio-cultural issues are cited as problems in implementing FPE. It attributes the drop out of 300,000 children six months after implementation of FPE to failure of the system to meet their expectations. The study, however, is a comprehensive one. It combines document analysis and field study. It is an in-depth analysis of FPE in Malawi, discussing it from its inception to implementation and evaluation. It actually isolates experiences and lessons learnt from them. A presentation of the various players in the program is made, drawing a picture that depicts collaboration between stakeholders. The study, however, tends to be more optimistic in that it does not dwell much on the negative experiences. Rather, it focuses more on what has been achieved and what the way forward will be.

In Kenya, FPE experience is more similar to the Malawi one. In fact Kenya assumed FPE in 2003, almost 8 years after Malawi. Just like Malawi, the declaration was part of an election campaign pledge, which the president elect fulfils soon after assuming power. Such political declarations are normally characteristic of lack of pre- implementation planning of which consequences the technocrats involved have to battle with while the program is already on the ground. In an article carried in the IRIN website (2003), Kenya experienced an influx of children into school upon declaration of FPE, hitting around 100% rise in enrollment. However, it observes that some children are still out of school, some dropped out because of “ a combination of factors including poverty, social problems, child labor, displacement, lack of schools and teachers” (p.2). In Nairobi alone, it estimates about 48% of children between the ages of 6 and 13 as being out of school.

Finally, The Forum for African Women Educationalists (2000) reports that some organizations and Ministries of Education in selected countries found that the main reason given by dropouts as a cause for their dropping out of school and not re-enrolling for both girls and boys was poverty. This, it said, is expressed as lack of money to meet school expenses (even in countries like Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda who have forms of free education for primary schooling), and just the need to leave school in order to work and earn some money. The next important reason for girls is pregnancy (almost 10% of total number of dropouts in Tanzania), followed by demands for household chores and the need to work on the farms in varying degrees for different countries. Lack of interest is given as an important factor for dropping out of school and not re-entering, especially in Malawi. This could be an indication of school environmental factors that are not conducive to learning and staying in school. It adds that the trend is that in primary

schools, dropout rates are highest at grade one for both boys and girls and by the 4th grade, about a quarter of the initial cohort has dropped out of school. Starting with the fifth grade, more girls than boys tend to drop out of school, presumably due to pregnancies, early marriages and demands for house hold chores.

In sum, the studies that have been looked at provide a rich basis from which this study is going to take off. They are largely similar in their findings. Though not all are exclusively focusing on drop out, their findings contain an appreciation of its existence in the systems they are analyzing. More importantly, they spell out the causes, which largely tend to be similar. The causes generally range from school, to socio-economic and cultural factors. The proceeding chapter looks at the methods that will be used in the current study.

Chapter 3

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This study, like the one conducted by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, investigates why many of the children who enroll in school end up dropping out. It ventures to do so by means of an actual field survey. Unlike the mentioned study, which treats the question as part of a larger analysis of the free primary education, this study intends to restrict itself to the issue in question. It also restricts itself to a particular geographical area, a district, trying to find out if what other studies have found out holds true to this district as well. The chapter provides a general overview of the design, population and samples, the instruments and modes of analysis used, and the limitations there are to the study.

3.1 Study design

As indicated above, this study made use of data obtained raw from the field. This data was collected and analyzed qualitatively, with some quantitative elements aimed at achieving a remarkable degree of accuracy and reliability of results. Below are the details of the design of the study.

3.1.1 Population and setting

The study intended to solicit information from grass root stakeholders. These were from the chosen schools and their communities and included children in and out of school and parents. This is a group of people within the influence of the chosen schools. Generally, many people in Malawi are poor, with an average GNP annual per capita

income of not more than \$170 and literacy rate of 33% (MoE and UNICEF, 1998). This is true for the population in this study, which is largely a mixture of the Yao and Lomwe tribes. However, most of their traditional beliefs and practices tend to be similar.

Religiously, they are largely Christians and Muslims.

The field study was conducted in Chiradzulu district, which is in the southern region of Malawi. In the district, two educational zones have been selected. It would have been much better if more zones, or the whole district was covered, but resources are a limitation.

The two zones were chosen in terms of their proximity to the district education office where I was operating from (again due to resource limitation).

3.1.2 *Sampling*

A total of five sample schools and their communities were involved in the study, three from one zone and two from the other. As indicated already in the introduction, the two zones were selected through convenience sampling, due to their proximity to the researcher's operation station; a question of resource limitation.

Five schools were selected from the two zones of which two are those that have received rehabilitation. 6 pupils in each of the of six schools were involved, 4 of them from junior section (stds 4 and 5) and the other 2 from senior section (std 6). An attempt was also made to make one-half boys and the other girls. Their selection involved random sampling to be done in each of the classes and sexes separately. Infant section was left out deliberately because of the ages involved, which would make communication difficult. A group of out of school children were also interviewed. At least four from the community around each school would be desirable, again on 50:50 gender chances. The

number here could be bigger or smaller depending on availability of such (out of school) children.

Apart from the pupils, the study will also consult parents/guardians. From each school and the community around it, at least 4 parents/guardians for drop out children were to be identified, giving a total of twenty parent participants. Head teachers for the five chosen schools will also be consulted.

Sampling in the study is much of purposive. This is a deliberate move aimed at making the sample as more relevant to the study as possible while making sure that the it is as free from prejudice as possible. However, due to factors elaborated towards the end of the chapter under *Limitations*, lesser numbers of participants than desired were actually involved. Though some schools provided extremely low numbers of parents and out of school children, the total number of parents interviewed came up to 19, only 1 short of the desired number, 20. This was so because some schools provided more parents than they were asked of. For the drop out children, just over half of the desired number turned up (13 out of 20). All the intended in school children were present. The study, therefore, still proceeded for it was felt that the level of turn up was adequate for the intended scope.

3.1.3 *Instruments*

The survey used three instruments. The first one is questionnaires. All pupil respondents were served with the questionnaires that were in the local language. Secondly, interviews were conducted among parents and out of school children. Lastly, the study also did some analysis of relevant documents available on the topic such as school data and broader national education statistics.

The researcher, with some professional guidance, formulated both the questionnaires and the interview schedules. The questionnaire for the school children required choice of responses provided after each question (checklist). The last option always gave chance for responses/opinion not given on the list. However, the provided answer options were carefully designed to include all possible hypothetical factors (that determine a child's joining and staying in school or dropping out) that the children might want to articulate, generally based on what literature has it on the issue.

The interview schedule was framed in a similar thematic format as the questionnaires, only that respondents were left entirely free to make their own responses to the questions. The interviews were used for the parent sample because many of them were not literate. The schedule was designed in such a way that responses fell into pre-formed framework so that the interviewer did not spend much time recording what the respondent gave them. Fraenkel (1990) calls this approach 'precoding' (p. 121). The questionnaires and the interview schedules were proof read by a group of teachers and pupils, in both cases modifications followed where necessary before taking them to the real respondents of the study.

Finally, an analysis of available school data was made. This data included enrollment, dropout rates, completion rates, absenteeism, and causes where possible, segregating it by gender.

3.1.4 *Analysis*

The study is both descriptive and explanatory. As such, analysis of data was mainly be in terms of frequencies of variables as cited by the respondents. Factual information from respondents' own-constructed responses were utilized as well.

3.2 Limitations

The design of the study has largely been determined by resources available. If resources were not limited, the study would increase the size of the sample and area of coverage to make it more representative, generalizable to the whole district. The study was also threatened by the willingness of out of school children to participate. Sometimes such subjects thought the investigation had some punitive implication and were not be willing to participate. However, the study went through head teachers who assured them of their safety. Still, many parents and out of school children were not willing to participate, mainly for the fact that an announcement had just been made by the government that it would soon implement compulsory education whereby parents who do not send their children to school would be punished. Thinking that this was part of the initiative, turn up was in some cases very poor. This was also augmented by a poor chilly rainy weather during the week of data collection. Many people preferred staying indoors. However, the study went ahead because the turn up was still satisfactory. Even the drop out children, who were the least represented, exceeded half the intended number.

Lastly, the study was also threatened by availability of data, especially official records, more so in schools. It turned out that many schools do not keep detailed records. For example, repetition and transfers was unavailable in all the sample schools. In some cases, even enrollment for some years was not available.

The study was estimated to take place in the timeframe presented in table 6 below.

Table 6. A timeframe of activities.

Activity	J a n	F e b	M a r	A p r	M a y	J u n	J u l	A u g	S e p	O c t	N o v	D e c
Developing and testing instruments		→										
Collecting data			→		→							
Analyzing data						→						
Interpreting data							→					
Draft repot								→	→			

(Subject to change with various factors)

The chapter has laid out the basic approaches or methods the study is going to use that largely lead to more qualitative than quantitative analysis. The following chapter brings the findings as well as discussion of the same.

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the study after a careful collection and analysis of data. It presents the findings according to groups of participants, that is drop out children, pupils, Head teachers and parents in that order. It also examines these groups against all the hypotheses.

4.2 DROP OUT CHILDREN

Generally, out of the 13 dropouts who were interviewed, it was observed that they ranged in age from 9 to 16. However, there were more children aged 14 than any other age (38%). Out of the 13 children, 8 of them dropped out in standards 4 and 5 (61%).

a) Distance to school

Introduction:

To determine whether distance to school was a problem that contributed to their dropping out of school or not, several questions were administered to the drop out children. The ages at which these children dropped out range from 9 to 16, while the classes they dropped at range from standards 1 to 7. Table 7 below sums up the responses.

Table 7

Sample size	Travel means		Walking time (home to school)		Children with travel problems	Children with no travel problems
	Walk	Other	0-20 min.	Over 30 min.		
13	13	0	11	2	4	9

Discussion:

Most of the dropout children indicated that they went to their nearest schools and that about 85% walked a distance of between 0 and 20 minutes to school. None of them used any other means of travel than walking. 4 of the 13 children (30%) expressed concern that travel to and from school was a problem, 2 citing long distance and 2 citing rivers without bridges as the challenges. The rest 9 (70%) indicated that they never had any problems with travel to school. The results here indicate that the hypothesis that distance contributes to drop out does not hold much in this context. In other words factors other than distance are more attributable to the drop out in this area.

Interpretation:

Chiradzulu district has experienced a boom in expansion and establishment of schools such that they are many and well distributed throughout the district. This justifies the finding that generally distance to school is not a problem. However, there are some isolated areas that may require attention. In addition, there are other factors of distance that may contribute to the problem such as availability and state of bridges. In Chiradzulu, despite that to a large extent schools are close to each other, there is a percentage of drop out (about 30% of the drop out sample) that can be attributed to the distance factor.

b) **Food**

Introduction:

Food is an indisputable source of energy. It allows people to do many different kinds of activities of which learning, or even mere walking to school, are part. Investigation on the drop out children about their food intake when they were still in

school revealed that all them in the sample did not have breakfast when going to school and that they were generally short of the ‘minimum’ food intake. (Refer to table 2).

Table 8. Food intake by drop out children when they were still in school

Total # of children	Had breakfast		Ate on Break time			Number of meals /day			Very hungry times		
	Yes	No	Always	Some days	Never	0-1	2	3	Home	Sch.	Both
13	0	12	0	5	8	4	6	1	3	4	5

Discussion:

From table 8 above, 12 out of the 13 children (92%) indicated that they never had breakfast before going to school. One respondent did not indicate anything. While at school, only 38% of the children had a chance to eat something only some days of the week, not always. 8 of the 13, which is 61%, did not eat anything. Out of the 12 children who did not have breakfast, 7 (58%) did not eat during break time either. This means they spent the entire school day hungry. Most of the children (55%) had 2 meals per day while a good 36% had one meal per day, or could sometimes go without any.

Out of 12 children, 4 (33%) indicated that they feel most hungry during school hours, while 41% indicated that they feel hungry almost the whole day.

Interpretation:

From the findings above, many of the children did not have adequate food to enable them grow healthy which is an important condition for active learning. The state of being hungry alone is capable of discouraging children from staying in school. Food hunting and work that pays may be more attractive and rewarding than staying in school. Only 25% of the respondents indicated that they feel the most hungry when they are at home. 33% said they felt most hungry when they were at school, while as 42% indicated that they were equally hungry at school and at home. This might make home more

attractive than school because, even if they are hungry at home, they will be more free to hunt for food such as wild fruits than they would be in the discipline governed school premises.

c) *Health*

Introduction:

Children may not attend school regularly or may even drop out if they are not in good health. The study however established through its findings that this is not much of a problem in this area of Chiradzulu. Refer to table 9.

Table 9

Sample size	Absenteeism due to sickness			Common sicknesses		Treatment type		
	Freq.	Some	Nvr	Type	# of children	Hos	Trd	Nvr
13	1	8	3	Malaria	2	4	2	3
				Headache	2			
				Stomachache	2			
				Flu	1			
				Limb pain	2			

Key

Absenteeism due to sickness

Freq = frequently

Some = sometimes

Nvr = never

Treatment type

Hos = hospital

Trd = traditional

Nvr = no treatment

Discussion:

The issue of absenteeism due to sickness was not very serious here. Only one out of the 13 children (8%) reported being frequently absent due to sickness. 8 were sometimes absent and 3 said were never absent due to sickness. Common ailments include malaria, headache, stomachache and pain of the limbs. Whilst over 44% of those who get sick rely on hospital treatment, 22% rely on traditional medicine and 33% do not bother seeking treatment of any kind.

Interpretation:

Despite that the respondents indicated that the problem of sickness and absenteeism was not very serious, Head teachers indicated that during the rainy season, the problem rises due to malaria which is prevalent in the season. The problem can also be augmented by the tendency of the majority of the sick children not being keen on hospital treatment. This may prolong or even complicate the sickness.

d) Clothing

Introduction:

Clothing is one of the areas that respondents indicated to be problematic. Overall findings show that many of the dropouts reported often being absent when they were in school and were almost always embarrassed by the state of their clothes (See table 10 below).

Table 10

Sample size	Absent because of poor clothes			Ashamed of clothes		Support uniform	
	Freq	Some	Nvr	Yes	No	Yes	No
13	10	0	2	10	2	6	5

Key

Absent because of poor clothes

Freq = frequently Some = sometimes Nvr = never

Discussion:

Out of the 13 dropouts, 10 (76%) were frequently absent from school because they did not have good clothes. Whenever they came to school, they were constantly embarrassed by the state of their clothes. 46% supported compulsory uniform citing easy identification, good looking and uniformity among pupils that reduce the gap between the

rich and the poor as the main reasons. The remaining 38% went against the proposal citing lack of money as the reason.

Interpretation:

Poverty incidence being high in Malawi, clothing is one of the aspects that is seriously affected. With minimal incomes that are not enough even for basic food, many households cannot afford decent clothes. Children are probably the worst off since priority goes to adults. As they are getting into puberty, the children develop a sense of embarrassment towards the way they appear. This turns out to be a serious cause of dropout. Uniform in Malawi was made non-compulsory the same year primary education was made free. This was so because it was seen as a barrier to basic education especially to those who could not afford it. Many people who favor uniforms argue that it reinforces equality among children, narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor. Though with a narrow margin, more dropout children preferred uniforms than those who opposed it. However, those who opposed it did so citing poverty as the reason. Uniform is relatively more expensive to acquire than second hand clothes on the village market. As such, reintroduction of the uniform policy would disadvantage a good percentage of the poor.

e) School Environment

Introduction

In Chradzulu, many schools have adequate classrooms. The problem in most cases is the condition in which they are. A number of projects have contributed much in terms of both construction and rehabilitation of classrooms in the district.

Table 11

Sample size	Learning venue		Desks available		Water available		Latrines available		Unpleasant elements	
	Class room	Open air	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Element	# of Children
13	10	2	5	7	10	1	12	0	Sitting on the floor	2
									Bad classrooms	1
									Repeating a class 3 times	1
									Friends had better clothes	1

Discussion:

Out of the 13 dropouts, 10 (76%) indicated that when they were still in school, they got their lessons from classrooms and had water at the school. Over 92% had latrines and 38% had desks. The children did not have much to complain about in general. 15% complained of sitting on the floor while as only 8% complained about bad classrooms. (See table 11 above).

Interpretation:

From the responses, the dropout children do not regard infrastructure, water and sanitation to have been a problem in their previous schools. In general therefore, these factors cannot very much be attributable to the children's dropping out, perhaps except for the 15% who complained about sitting on the floor.

*f) Teachers' handling of pupils**Introduction*

In general teachers' handling of pupils has a crucial role in keeping them attracted to school. Realizing this, government has put in place several policies such as the abolition of corporal punishment, so as to enhance positive relationships between teachers and their pupils. Findings here show that there is still some need for improvement as regards relationship between pupils and their teachers. See table 12 below.

Table 12

Sample size	Teachers' attitude		Teachers' assistance			Pupil Counseling	
	Cruel	Kind	1	2	3	Type	# of respondents
13	5	6	2	2	2	General conduct	10
						STDs, HIV/AIDS	7
						Teen age pregnancies	5
						Education importance	8

Discussion:

38% of the drop out children indicated that, while still in school, they found their teachers cruel. Another 38% found their teachers less helpful and 15% found their teachers unhelpful in facilitating learning. 38% of the children indicated that sexual relationships between teachers and pupils existed in their schools, 23% of them indicated a more serious occurrence. On a positive note, over 61% of the children indicated that they received counseling from their teachers on issues such as good conduct, sex and sexuality and importance of education.

Interpretation:

Findings in this area indicate that there is a good percentage of teachers who lack the right, child friendly approaches in handling pupils. Many also lack the commitment that is required to facilitate learning. As a result of these, children develop fear as well as frustration that may compel them to drop out.

g) Teacher absenteeism*Introduction:*

Closely related to the issue of teachers' commitment is the issue of absenteeism. It is generally said that civil servants in Malawi, more so teachers, are fond of being absent from work due to low motivation which, in most cases, results in their engaging in other income generating activities which compete with official duties in terms of time.

Surprisingly, the drop out children in this study reported less absenteeism of teachers when they were in school.

Table 13

Frequency of absenteeism	# of respondents
Much	1
Little	4
Never	6

Discussion:

Out of 11 children, 4 (36%) reported that they experienced little occurrence of teacher absenteeism whilst only 1 (9%) indicated that the problem was serious in their school/class. 6 (55%) reported no such incidents. (See table 13).

Interpretation:

Teacher absenteeism is reducing by the day in Chiradzulu because of the special remedial treatment the district education office is employing to curb the tendency. Absenteeism with genuine causes gets a backing from the Head teacher while the rest is punished by salary deductions. As such, teacher absenteeism would not be considered a factor of dropout.

h) **Punishments**

Introduction:

Again, closely related to the issue of how children perceive their teachers, in terms of whether they are cruel or kind, is the issue of punishments. Punishments are supposed to be correctional, but if they are overdone, especially depending on the age of the children, they can be destructive to the children's perception and feelings about school. The drop out children reported more punishment misadministration in the schools concerned. (See table 14).

Table 14

Punishments	
Type	# of respondents
Sweeping/Cleaning	8
Clearing	3
Pit digging	5
Returning	1
Running	1
Corporal	9

Discussion:

The drop out children reported that teachers largely administered harsh punishments and quite commonly (about 70% of the respondents) the outlawed corporal types that actually inflict bodily pain. For those types that are acceptable, sometimes the magnitude and duration is not acceptable. Some respondents indicated punishment durations of up to whole school day. A small percentage indicated that they are some times returned from school as punishment for an offence especially late coming.

Interpretation:

Teachers' conduct and handling of pupils is an area that has more impact on pupils' attitude towards school. Leading on the list of punishments usually used by teachers is the outlawed corporal. Where the other 'acceptable' types were used, the magnitude was often reported to be disproportional to offence or age of the offender. This, according to the drop out children, contributed very much to their dropping out.

i) Children's background

Introduction

Background of children is very crucial to their staying in school. The financial, material and moral support they get from their guardians and the entire domestic setting

can be a serious determinant of their interest in education. The drop out children generally displayed, in their responses, a difficult background situation. See table 15.

Table 15

Sample size	Guardians				Guardians' income sources	
13		father	Mother	Father & Mother	Other	
	Looked after by	0	4	3	4	
	Lost parents	3	0	3	2 (divorce)	
						Source # of respondents
						Employed 3
						Business 3
						Comm. farmer 0
						Substst. farmer 7

Table 15 (continued)

Guardians' possessions				Children's current occupation			Absent from sch. to work		
Radio	Bicycle	House	Car	Casual labor	House chores	Attending patient	Often	Sometimes	Never
8	5	3	0	6	7	1	0	2	10

Interpretation

Only 27% of the drop out children live with both their father and mother. 36% live with their mother, and another 36% live with people other than their parents. 27% lost their father, another 27% lost both parents and 18% have parents who divorced. 53% of the children have parents who are neither employed nor do any business. They practice subsistence farming which mostly does not even produce enough food for half the year. The majority (77%) does not have decent houses and 62% cannot even afford a radio. The children are also required to assist in most of the work at home. 46% are engaged in casual labor (temporary manual work mostly in others' gardens) in order to get their

needs as well as supplement those of their families. It is interesting, however, that 77% indicated that they never were absent from school in order to work.

Discussion:

Most of the drop out children come from backgrounds that are not very conducive to attending school. Death of parents and economically able relatives and very low socio-economic statuses present a situation where the children could not get the support that they require to remain in school. The children require food , clothes as well as those miscellaneous expenses that go with education such as pens and security contributions (for the payment of school security guards, which seems to be a very common practice among schools currently). Again, in the homes where manual labor and subsistence farming is the order of life, the opportunity cost of sending children to school is very high. The families need them to help in raising some income for basics of life such as food.

j) What really caused the children to drop out:

Introduction

All the other questions dealt with above are trying to explore the various possible situations that contributed to the dropping out of the children from school. Last is the question that tries to pinpoint and summarize the task by actually asking the children for the actual *straws that broke the camel's back*. A number of conditions were provided and the children were asked to choose those that they believe strongly contributed to their dropping out of school. The issue that dominates is that of the children's background. Hunger, lack of clothes, death of parents and/or dependable relatives are some of the commonplace factors. See table 16 below

Table 16

Sample size	Hunger	Lack of clothes	Bad/ inadequate classrooms	Lack of desks	Teacher's cruelty	Teacher's sex abuse
13	10	9	2	2	5	1

Table 16 (continued)

No Water at sch.	Lack of toilets at sch.	IGAs/ Employment	Distance to sch.	Marriage	Pregnancy	Death of Guardian	Other
1	0	4	2	0	0	5	2

Key: Trs= Teachers

Other = 1- laziness 2- fond of fighting

Interpretation

80% of the children cited hunger as the main factor for their dropping out. 69% cited lack of clothes while 38% indicated teachers' cruelty. Death of parents and/or dependable relatives got 38%. However, death of parents /relatives would just entail the coming of the other factors already looked at. Income generating activities got 30%. This tells how desperate the children and their families are for income to sustain life. (It should be noted that respondents were allowed to choose as many factors as they felt relevant to their situation). Issues of school infrastructure mattered less here, largely because many schools in the sample received rehabilitation. No drop out reported doing so because of early marriage and pregnancies.

Discussion:

Children in the schools under study and in most of the schools in Chiradzulu face problems that are poverty rooted. Hunger, lack of clothes, lack of parental support and others frustrate children and compel them to drop out of school. General poverty that is prevalent among most rural Malawians, coupled with death and divorce of parents,

presents a big challenge for the average Malawian child in his/her endeavor to pursue education. Many of them end up dropping out. Many of them are rushing into temporary employment (in people's gardens and houses) and into marriages in order to support themselves, their brothers and sisters (in case of orphans) and even to supplement their families' income.

The school environment, especially how teachers handle children, is another cause of children's negative attitude towards school. Hard punishments and those that actually inflict physical pain are very prevalent in the schools and are a cause of worry to the child. The system loses a good deal of children to this cause.

While as the issue of infrastructure and water and sanitation facilities do not feature very high here, it is worth noting that it is still a problem in some cases such that a percentage of dropouts, however small it may be, could be attributed to this factor.

4.2 IN-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Introduction

The study engaged children who are still in school to assess their situation as regards the hypotheses and their likelihood of staying in school or dropping out. Thirty pupils, one half girls and the other boys, from five schools responded to a questionnaire that sought their experiences in and out of school. These children were from standards four to six. Generally, they reported conditions similar to what the dropouts cited, giving an impression that they too are at risk of dropping out. However, the data reveal that many of the drop out children faced more extreme of the challenges compared to the in

school group. For example, only 20% of the in-school children indicated that they are frequently absent because of poor clothes as compared to 77% for the drop out children. Whilst 57% of the in-school children indicated that they do not have breakfast when going to school, 92% of the dropouts said they did not have breakfast when they were still in school. On punishments, 60% of the in-school children indicated they get corporal punishments compared to 70% for the dropouts who indicated that they got it when they were still in school. On what actually caused or would cause them to drop out, both groups indicated hunger, clothing and teachers' unkindness as being top of the list.

After analyzing the in-school children's situation against the hypothetical factors starting with food, the discussion will proceed with the views of the head teachers of the five schools on what causes dropout in their schools.

a) **Food**

Introduction

Just like for the drop out children, the study set out to study the extent to which in-school children have access to food. Despite the fact that food is central to an active body and mind, results indicate that a good number of children do not have food when they were supposed to. See table 17 below.

Table 17

Sample size	Break fast per Week (5 days)							Break time Snack per week (5 days)							Meals/ day			Hunger at sch.			Hunger at home		
30	0	1	2	3	4	5	Common types	0	1	2	3	4	5	B	L	S	1	2	3	1	2	3	
	10	2	1	1	3	1	Tea	8	2	7	1	4	8	18	22	28	9	12	9	3	22	4	
							Porridge																
							Cassava																
							Potatoes																
						Rice																	

Key: Hunger at school and at home
1= very much 2= much 3= little

Meals
B= breakfast L= lunch S= supper

Interpretation

33% of the children indicated that they do not have breakfast when going to school. 23% could have breakfast some days of the week but not always. 27% indicated that they do not eat anything during school hours either, whilst about 47% could have something to eat some days but not always. Whilst some children do not have breakfast, others, about 27%, find no lunch at home when they come back from school. More children feel very hungry at school than those that feel equally hungry at the time they are at home (30% versus 10%).

Discussion

The food situation for in-school children poses a serious threat to their retention for it is not very different to the one for the drop out children. In total about 57% of the sample goes to school without the energy breakfast provides for the day, at least some day of the week. Some are not sure that when they return home they will have lunch while others (between 7% and 27%) would spend the whole day without a meal. Apart from lacking the energy with which learning ought to take place, the children are likely to be malnourished, a condition that may hinder healthy development of both the body and mind which is very likely to affect their intellectual capabilities. Above all, as argued for the drop out children, for a hungry child, home would be more attractive than school partly because home provides relative freedom from energy demanding mandatory school schedules and also partly because of the chance home provides for food hunting.

b) Distance to school

Introduction

When children have to walk distances longer than they can bear to get to school, and if the roads have barriers such as rivers without bridges, likelihood of some of them dropping out of school is very high. The table below (18) however, shows that the problem is not very serious in Chiradzulu

Table 18

Sample size	Duration of travel (minutes)				Means of travel			Feelings about travel			
	0-10	11-20	21-30	Over 30	Walk	Bike	Public tpt	Easy	Hard	Reason	Respondents
30	3	13	10	4	29	0	1	22	8	Far	5
										River without bridge	2
										Bad path	1

Interpretation

Most of the children in this sample group (87%) do not walk for over 30 minutes when going to school. Roughly this translates into 3 kilometers and below. The official maximum radius per school is 5 kilometers PIF. This means that the children are within the 'acceptable' radius from their schools. Though the difference is minimal, more dropout children (30%) reported trouble with getting to and from school than the in-school children (26%). With such responses, the threat that distance to school poses is not a serious one, and is a weak factor for drop out in this area.

c) Clothes

Introduction:

With the drop out children, clothing occurred as one of the major factors for their dropping out of school. Examining the in-school children on the issue reveals that it is a potential threat for more drop out. See table 19 below.

Table 19

Sample size	Absent because of poor clothes			Feelings about clothes		Has uniform		Support uniform					
	Frequently	Some times	Never	Good	Bad	Yes	No	Yes	No	Reasons			
30										For uniform	#	Against Uniform	#
	6	7	16	8	20	14	16	25	3	Looks good	15	Poverty	2
										Easy identity	10		

Discussion:

In total 43% of the pupils reported absenteeism due to problems associated with clothing. 20% of them reported frequent absenteeism while 23 % reported a mild occurrence. 67% reported feeling bad about their clothes. Despite abolition of compulsory uniform, 47% reported having it and 83% supported having it.

Interpretation:

The problem of clothing features highly among children in the study. This is part of the larger problem of poverty amongst rural Malawians. Poor clothing is a big factor of drop out as well as a potential threat to the in-school children. Clothes might be poor in terms of state as well as type. When data for the study was being collected, many children were absent from school because the weather was bad. It was very cold. Many girls (and some boys) wrapped themselves in their mothers' cotton wrappers. Many boys would not want to be seen in such wrappers. To many, a fireplace at home was more attractive than the cold, highly ventilated classroom.

d) Children's background

Introduction:

An attempt to assess the children's background was made. This was in belief that home environment factors, especially economic, have an impact on the children's school life and can be determinant to whether they stay in school or not.

Responding to questions on this topic, slightly over 55% of the children reported living with only one or neither of their parents. 17% reported that both parents are dead. Most of the households are of very low income, a good number of them (37%) relying on subsistence farming alone. The situation, again, is not very much different from that of the drop out children. Lack of adequate parental care, whatever the cause, poses a big threat to the school life of the child. Again, even those who have reliable people who support them, their socio-economic statuses are so vulnerable that they cannot guarantee a good future for the child. Already, 33% of the in-school children are engaged in activities that generate money to supplement their families incomes, and 30% reported staying away from school some days to work for the supplementary income. (See more in appendix 24). The state of children's background therefore is a big threat to the retention of children in school in Chiradzulu district.

e) School Environment

To determine whether general school environment was a potential factor for drop out or not, the pupils in the sample were given questions about it and generally reported an encouraging situation. Just like with the drop out children, most of the in school children indicated that they liked their schools and their general environments. 83% reported to have classrooms and desks that were in good condition and that they liked

them. All the schools from which the pupils came had boreholes right at the school. Only one school was reported to have bad latrines. (See appendices 26, 27, and 28).

As already stated, Chiradzulu received a project that renovated and constructed additional structures in some schools and provided water to all the schools. This explains the findings. Otherwise, hypothetically, a bad school environment is a potential factor of drop out.

f) Punishments

As argued for the dropouts, punishment is supposed to correct bad conduct. However, type and magnitude in terms of size and duration matter for pupils, especially in a country like Malawi, where education is not compulsory. Children can simply just walk out of school if they fear or do not find a punishment just. The in-school children reported high incidence of the outlawed corporal types of punishments. Findings also show that teachers rely very much on punishment rather than other means to deal with pupils' issues of discipline.

17 % of the pupils reported fearing their teachers within a week mainly for offences that they had committed against them. 87% of the children reported having been punished in the present class. Sweeping, clearing and cleaning were reported the highest used (87%), seconded by corporal types with 60%. Returning pupils home was also reported. (See table 20 below).

Table 20

Table 20										
Sample Size	Fear Teachers?		Punishments							
			Ever been punished?		Common Types	# of Respo nses	Duration in general			
	Yes	No	Yes	No			0-30 min	31-60 min	61-2hrs	Over 2hrs
	30	5	24	26			2	Sweeping/Cleani ng/Clearing	26	16
Pit digging					7					
Returning					6					
Corporal					18					

Punishments in Chiradzulu schools need to be revisited for they are a potential factor of drop out. Extensive use of corporal types, against government policy would make the school a dangerous place for the kids. One lady teacher whipped all the children in her class because they were making noise when the school had received a visitor (the researcher, who is also the district's education manager). This suggests ignorance of policy by the teachers. She did not know that what she was doing was outlawed. Some of the 'offenses' are not worth the term. For example, failure in an academic task like solving a mathematics problem, which many pupils reported, should rather call for more of the teacher's helping effort, rather than calling for physical punishment.

Offenses in all schools include lateness, noise making, and failure in class work.

g) What may cause the children to drop out:

An attempt was made to find out the possible threats that the children in school were facing that could compel them to leave school. These are the same summary questions that were given to the drop out children and are also, in a way, a summary of this inquiry. Just like with the drop out children, economic factors such as lack of food and clothes top the chat. Out of 30 pupils, 70% indicated poor clothes as a possible cause to their dropping out of school. 53% indicated hunger whilst 42% cited teachers' cruelty

as potential factors. See table 17. Despite that none of the drop out children did so because of pregnancy or marriage, 30% of the in-school children reported likelihood of dropping out because of being either pregnant or responsible for it. See table 21.

Table 21

Sample size	Hunger	Lack of clothes	Bad/ inadequate classrooms	Lack of desks	Teachers' cruelty	Teachers' Sex abuse	No Water at sch.
30	16	21	3	3	13	8	5

Table 21 (continued)

Lack of toilets at school	IGA/Employment	Distance to sch.	Marriage	Pregnancy	Other (specify)
5	5	9	5	9	Illness (1)

As can be seen from the findings, there is a potential threat within the system of more drop out if conditions continue to be the way they are. Many children find going to school and staying there on an empty stomach very hard. Similarly, children, especially when they are at or approaching puberty, will always start being conscious of what they wear, especially at a formal gathering like the school. The hard economic situations in most of the country make solutions to these problems a far-fetched dream. The pregnancy issue can be complicated for it can be a consequence of lack of counseling and guidance or it can be a function of poverty, which would be harder to remedy in isolation of the underlying cause. For the handling of children by teachers, it is very possible to bring in an intervention that remedies the situation.

4.3 HEAD TEACHERS

Introduction

The study asked head teachers one general question as to what they new as the major causes of drop out in their schools. This was in alternative to school records analysis which failed due to their unavailability in this respect. Mostly, they concurred with both the drop out as well as the in-school children many of the factors. They also mentioned pregnancies and laziness and parental laxity as additional factors (see table 22).

Table 22

Sample	Food	Clothes	Work/ IGAs	Pregnancies/marr riages	Laziness/par ental laxity	Distance
5	5	5	5	5	2	1

Discussion

In their responses, all of them concurred of them concurred on inadequate food, poor clothes, work that earned the children money, and pregnancies and early marriages. Two of them (40%) mentioned laziness and parental laxity as a factor, and one (20%) Mentioned distance.

Interpretation

Despite that the none of the drop out children was a victim of pregnancy and/ or early marriage (sample too small to possibly include all other factors), the head teachers argued strongly that it was one of the major factors. The head teachers were also quick to point out that it was basically a function of poverty. The two head teachers who mentioned laziness and parental laxity argued that their schools are in highly entrepreneurial communities which supply farm produce to the city of Blantyre. As such, parents normally leave early in the morning and come back late in the evening and are not able to

monitor their children who, upon realizing this fact, go to or stay away from school as they want.

4.4 GUARDIANS

The study also interviewed some parents or guardians who have at least one child who dropped out of school. The aim was to find out about their socioeconomic statuses, sizes of their families, and whether the children who had dropped out were their own or not. This would inform the study on the different types of backgrounds the children come from and the particular problems associated with such backgrounds.

A total of 19 parents/guardians (18 female and 1 male) were interviewed. Out of them, 15 (79%) reported for male drop out children as opposed to 4 (21%) who reported for female children, despite that there are more female than male dropouts. This might mean that parents are more concerned with the drop out of boys than they are with that of girls. 23 % reported of drop out children who were not their own, 37% of the guardians (all of them women) were single. (See table 29 in the appendix). On average, family membership reported was 7, 4 of whom were of school going age but only 1.5 children were at school. 58% reported that they lived on subsistence farming whilst the rest were either on a humble employment or operating a small income generating initiative. See table 23a. Their socioeconomic statuses were very low. 74 % lived in mud or green brick house with grass roofs. Only 47% had shoes and only 42% had a bicycle (where bicycle was the most advanced form of personal transport for the group). 32% had almost never been to school and only 11 percent went to secondary school. Whilst 42 % had sent at

least a child to secondary school, 36 % of those children dropped out due to lack of fees.

See table 30 in the appendix.

Table 23a Family size, schooling and source of livelihood.

Sample size	Ave. # in family	Ave. # of sch. going age per family	Ave. # at sch per family	Source of living			
				E	B	CF	SF
19	7	4	1.5	3	4	1	11

Source of living

E = Employed

B = Business

CF = Commercial farmer

SF = Subsistence farmer

Table 23b below shows that only 10% of the parents reported securing food enough for one year, otherwise most of them (53%) sourced food on a weekly basis. This meant that they were not sure of the proceeding week's supply.

Table 23b

Sample size	Food sourcing				Food types			Child had B/fast ?		Is B/fast Important?	
	1yr	1month	1wk	1day	C	V	P	Yes	No	Yes	No
19	2	6	10	1	19	18	9	-	11	19	0

Again, parents reported high imbalances in nutrition intake. Over half of them (53%) reported having access exclusively to carbohydrates (maize flour meal) and vegetables (vitamins) only. The rest (47%) reported sourcing protein food sometimes. All the parents reported not giving their children breakfast now before they dropped out of school. However, all of them indicated that breakfast was very important to a child who is going to school. See table 23b.

Poverty seemed to dominate amongst the guardians of the drop out children. They reported very low standards of life, which indicated that it was very difficult for them to get even the daily basics of life. It could be observed out right that almost all of them could hardly support a child in school to such levels that the child gets encouraged to go

on with education. For those who reported having children who had persevered through the free primary and got selected to secondary school the children ended up dropping out due to lack of fees. The problem is also exasperated by loss of parents (most likely due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic), which leaves the children in the responsibility of either indifferent or economically incapable relatives. Most of the single women who came for the interviews reported that they were widows. In rural Malawi, it is largely men who are breadwinners for their families, death of whom leaves the families impoverished.

Three parents reported that their drop out children were engaged in looking after their sick relatives. On whether there were children who were that special type like delinquents or those that were so active sexually, or indulged in alcohol and drug abuse, the parents reported a very negligible occurrence (see table 31 in the appendix). About 16% of the parents reported that their children being physically handicapped and they believed that this condition contributed to their children's dropping out of school. (See table 31 in the appendix)

A summary question asked the parents what they felt was the cause of their wards' dropping out of school. Those who cited poverty, hunger and lack of good clothes added up to 100%. This meant that each one of them had at least one of these factors applicable to their situation. However these factors are so related that they will almost always go together. They can befittingly embrace the umbrella term of poverty. (See table 32 in the appendix.)

In sum, the people interviewed generally manifested high levels of poverty with very weak sources of livelihood. They reported high food insecurity and poor clothing. Their families were large (with an average membership of 7). Out of the average of 4

school going age children in each family, only an average of 1.5 children went to school. The fact that only 1 male guardian (out of 19) turned up for the interview gave the impression that men have less or no interest at all in the education of their children. The in the study guardians manifested a deficiency in supporting their children to stay in School.

Having discussed the findings, the next chapter concludes the discussion as well as the whole study, providing some recommendations as to how the factors identified can be mitigated.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

The first thing that can be emphasized in this chapter is the fact that the problem of drop out as found out by this study is a serious issue in the primary schools in Chiradzulu district. Many children get into the system at entry level, which is standard 1. However, many of them are lost before they complete the primary circle. This study has also established some of the causes and they will be discussed below in relationship to the three groups of participants in the study: dropouts, in-school children, head teachers and guardians of drop out children.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Having examined each of the factors against the participating groups' responses, the study makes the following conclusions;

a) Distance to school

The study did not find distance to school as a big problem in Chiradzulu.

Chiradzulu has many schools, which are mostly well distributed. A Department for International Development (DfID- United Kingdom) funded project has just constructed additional schools and has also rehabilitated many more. 85% of the drop out children and 87% of the in-school children indicated that they walked for less than 20 minutes going to school. Estimating that a child walks a distance of 1 kilometer in 10 minutes, this suggests that most of the children walked less than 2 kilometers to school, which is

far below the ministry standard of 5 kilometers as the maximum a child should walk to school. Distance to school therefore is not one of the factors of drop out in Chiradzulu.

b) Teacher absenteeism

Absenteeism of teachers can both set a bad precedent to pupils as well as discourage the committed pupils. However, the study found out that this is not a big problem in Chiradzulu. This could be attributed to the system put in place at the district office by which Head teachers are encouraged to report any teacher who is absent without any valid reason to the office for a salary deduction equivalent to the number of days absent. At the time of data collection, such cases had reduced to less than three per month. Neither of the two groups of children in the study put this as a problem. Teacher absenteeism therefore is not a drop out factor in Chiradzulu.

c) School physical environment

In Chiradzulu, though school physical environment is a factor to drop out, it is not a big problem. As already stated above, most of the schools have 'basic' structural requirements. With an exception of a few, many schools have good classrooms, and all have water supply. For those that did not receive rehabilitation, the major problem is latrines. In the sample of schools, two are those that did not receive rehabilitation. Most of children who registered dissatisfaction with either the classrooms or latrines came from these schools. Only 17% of the drop out children complained about their latrines being bad whilst no one attributed their dropping out to bad classrooms.

Despite this encouraging finding, it should be pointed out here that physical environment of schools is crucial to retention and remains a problem in some schools in

Chiradzulu (with condition like or worse than the two non-rehabilitated schools in the sample).

d) **Health**

Health was neither seen as a drop out factor nor a potential threat to the in-school children. Neither the drop-out group nor the in-school reported having serious health problems that they associated with failure to continue with school. Only 7% of the drop out children and 3% of the in-school children reported being absent frequently because of sickness. Health, or poor health, therefore is not a factor of dropout in Chiradzulu.

e) **Food**

Food, or rather, lack of it has been singled out as one of the most important factors of drop out in Chiradzulu. For the drop out children, 92% did not have breakfast when going to school. 36% had one or no meal per day. Food is a threat to the system for about 33% of the in-school children go to school without breakfast. 30 % find themselves more hungry at school than they feel at home. These children are likely to drop out as well. Whilst as 80% of the drop outs cited hunger as one of the major factors of their dropping out, 53% of the in-school children cited hunger as one of the potential problems that can see them out of school.

Lack of food was also central in the guardians' responses. Many families in the rural areas, and quite often in the urban as well, have problems in providing food to their families. Mostly they have some food from the month of April, just after harvesting their crops, to about August. Thereafter, they mostly have to buy it, which they do mostly on a weekly basis (for they do not have enough money to buy more).

f) Clothing

Just like food, clothing turned out to be a possible major drop out factor in Chiradzulu. Many households are unable to afford good clothing for their children. As the children are growing, they develop a sense of embarrassment out of the way they dress, especially now that uniform is no longer compulsory, which makes conspicuous the difference between the poor and the well off. Coincidentally, 70% of both the drop out children and the in-school children cited lack of good clothes as both a factor of their dropping out (for the dropouts) as well as a potential threat that can compel the in-school children to drop out. Despite that uniform reduces the contrast between the 'rich' and the 'poor', many children felt that it is more expensive than the second hand clothes that most of the children wear and that its reintroduction would be to the disadvantage of the 'poor'.

e) Teachers' pupil management competences

The study has found that many children normally have a negative attitude towards their teachers. Many children indicated that they feared their teachers (38% of the drop out children and 43% of the in-school children). This could be a result of the authoritarian and sometimes unloving attitude teachers still have over their children. One drop out child cited an example of her teachers who used to scorn her and her parents in the classroom. She cited a male teacher who always told her that her failure in class was due to the fact that she was overage for school and that the only right thing for her was marriage. It could also be from the types of punishments the teachers give their pupils.

Teachers therefore contribute to whether children stay in school or not. The way they treat pupils, the way they talk to them and the way they show concern on their well being and success or failure, just to mention some, matter very much on the system's ability to retain pupils in schools.

g) Punishments

It has been found out by the study that punishment is one of the things that scare children from school. 70% of the dropouts cited punishments as contributing to their dropping out. 17% of the in-school children reported fearing a teacher that week for the punishments they would possibly get due to offences they had committed. The worrisome fact is that teachers are ignorant of policy pertaining to punishment. This is manifested by their continued use of corporal and disproportional punishments. This may mean teachers are not abreast of policy changes, which could be detrimental to the system. Types and magnitude of punishments are, to some extent, contributing to dropout by scaring the children away.

h) Poverty in children's backgrounds

Children's background is very crucial in determining whether they stay in school or not. In the first place, both hunger and clothes factors that have been discussed above stem from this mother factor. It has been revealed in this study that many of the children in the study as well as in Chiradzulu in general come from very poor homes. Most of the people, about 65%, live below poverty line at about \$1. per day (UNICEF, 2002.) and their living standards are very low. This makes it difficult for them to afford basic needs in life such as food and decent clothing. Death of parents and reliable relatives aggravate the situation. However, the study failed to gather enough data to attribute the rising death

rate to HIV/AIDS. Except for one parent who attributed the death of parents of the child she is keeping to AIDS, the rest reported other causes. Though the researcher suspected high HIV/AIDS prevalence in the communities, there was no scientific basis on which to equate the ailments respondents gave as causes of their relatives' deaths to HIV/AIDS. In the same way for the few children who were reported looking after sick relatives, it could not be established if the ailments were HIV related. However, there are many single parent families, sometimes headed by very old persons with no well-defined life means.

In sum most children's backgrounds are characteristic of dire poverty. According to economic analysts' reports, this is a nationwide problem. The country's economy is not only small, but also. It can therefore, perhaps be concluded that poverty is a national level factor of drop out, common to all districts.

i) Potential for more drop out in the system.

The study also ventured to examine what possibility is there for more drop out in the district. According to the findings, conditions in which the in-school children are, are the similar to those in which their drop out counterparts were when they were in school. For the in-school children, potential of dropping out because of pregnancies was also indicated. Issues of poverty augmented because of orphanage and issues of teacher treatment at school haunt a good percentage of the in-school children such that at the present state of affairs, it will not be strange to see constant, if not increasing numbers of children quitting school.

In sum, this study has come up with two major factors that cause drop out in Chiradzulu district. One is socio-economic and the other is an in-school factor (teachers' pupil management skills and strategies). The socio-economic largely comprise poverty,

which manifests itself in the form of hunger and lack of clothing and inability to meet other smaller expenses associated with schooling, a situation aggravated by orphanage due to increasing deaths of parents and reliable guardians. The in-school factor has to do with handling of children by teachers. Often times, children are managed with harshness they do not deserve. Scorning them instead of helping them when they have learning problems do the children more harm than good. Heavy reliance on punishment to correct behavior has its own weaknesses on children's attitude towards school as well as their concept of choice between wrong and right in life. They may develop a belief that wrong can be done so long as one is ready to withstand the resultant, instant, physical consequences. Types of punishment also matter. The study has established that corporal punishment is heavily in use in Chiradzulu. Apart from the fact that this kind of punishment is outlawed, the fact that it inflicts physical body pain should be enough to restrain its users. According to the participating children, corporal punishment and punishments that are not proportional to children's age and physical capability are a factor of drop out.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The situation regarding drop out in Malawi as a whole and Chiradzulu in particular is a serious one. If left unresolved, the system's internal efficiency will continue to dwindle and that in the long run it shall be realized that the cost of such inefficiency is unacceptably high in terms of low economic output, high illiteracy, low life standards, poor citizenship and many more. Further more a lot of resources have

already been committed to the provision of a free primary education. All these resources would just go down the drain if these leakages in the system are not sealed. In an attempt to avoid such a catastrophe, this study suggests the following remedial initiatives for the two most serious factors that have been verified in the Chiradzulu case, namely poverty and teachers' pupil management competences, in that order.

Firstly, the issue of poverty is too diverse and complex for a single sector like education and let alone small studies like this one to suggest tangible and all-encompassing solutions. The issue of poverty can only be effectively tackled by a multiple sector approach. However, there are other aspects of poverty that can be singled out and an attempt at redress be made at sector level. In the study hunger and lack of good clothing are the most outstanding poverty elements that affect retention in the schools. For hunger, this study suggests that a national policy be formulated to extend the school feeding programs, which is currently sporadically and intermittently operational in a few schools nationally, to all the rural and sub-urban public schools that take low-income pupils, in Chiradzulu, and probably countrywide. School feeding programs have succeeded not only in developing countries like India, but also in the developed world like The United Kingdom and The United States. This would mean mobilizing resources towards the program, which should be possible with the corporation of developing partners. At a multi-sectoral level, fertilizer subsidies and free agricultural input starter pack programs to the most poor, as well as agricultural extension programs should be revived and consolidated. These programs have proved in the past to be capable to making most Malawians food self sufficient and generally lowered food prices.

The second element of poverty, clothing, is a bit more complicated. However, the study suggests a compulsory heavily government subsidized uniform. The cost should be at par with or lower than second hand clothes on a village market. The study found out that many children adored uniform but loathed the cost. It could be decided whether it could be a national, division, district or school level uniform depending on how taxing it could be to find affordable but different materials to satisfy the likes of individual schools.

More counseling both to parents and pupils is required on sex and related topics for the children, especially girls. The social contract, a liased, written and signed agreement among school stakeholders, should be revisited every school term to remind everyone of their roles. Parents to be sensitized on the vulnerability of the girl child if confronted with dire poverty and sexual advances that promise material rewards. More girl friendly school practices should be encouraged in schools to instill hope and trust in school for the girl child. District, zonal and school staff to ensure this.

For the second factor, which has to do with teachers' competences in managing children and their knowledge of the policy, the study suggests training. First, the teacher training curriculum should intensify school and classroom management skills as well as equipping graduating teachers with current policies. Much training however should be at school level. District, zonal and school level staff (like senior school staff, Head teachers and their deputies) should develop a habit of conducting in-service training where the whole range of topics from pedagogical to administrative should be addressed at regular intervals. This is helpful especially considering that a good proportion of teachers in Chiradzulu as well as Malawi as a whole are not trained. However, trained teachers need

as much training. The two teachers observed using corporal punishment during the study for example are both old and trained teachers. Disciplinary action should also be taken against those teachers who opt for outlawed modes of handling pupils after the trainings.

All in all, special appeal should go to the Ministry of Education to seriously consider the findings and recommendations of this study so that the most applauded free primary education should be seen to bring to the nation the elegant promises it was launched with.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As observed in this study, the issue of dropout is such a big and complicated one. Analyzing and understanding it requires more investigation. This research, therefore, cannot be exhaustive in any way. More research is therefore called for on the topic. This study suggests that among other dimensions, further research could take the following dimensions:

- (a) A holistic, in-depth cohort analysis for several years (if not all the eight years of primary school) be done, taking on board all issues that are potential factors of dropout such as HIV/AIDS, parental levels of education, culture and others.
- (b) An in-depth study of single potential factors of dropout for their hidden impact.
- (c) A trend analysis of drop out in the pre Free Primary Education era, the first years of implementation of FPE and the later years.
- (d) The social and individual cost of dropout by level and/or region.

APPENDIX

Table 23c Teaching and learning activities (This table may go)

Subjects with teachers absent (previous week)	Subjects with exercises for pupils (previous week)	Likely pupil reaction upon failure of final exams		
18 pupils, had an average of about 2 subjects/week.	18 pupils had an average of 4 exercises/week	Drop out 1	Repeat class 27	Change schs. 7

Table 24 In-school children Background

Sample size	Guardians				Lost parents		Guardians' source of income				Guardians' possessions				Support from Guardians		
30	F	M	FM	O	Dead	Divorced	E	B	C	SF	R	B	H	C	1	2	3
	0	10	12	6	F	M	F	M	I	9	8	4	11	26	12	15	2
					7	1	5										

Table 25 In-school children Background

Home time tasks			Absent from sch. to work	
Free Domestic	Domestic IGA	Paid labor	Yes	No
27	5	5	9	21

Key:

Guardians/Parents

F = Father

M = Mother

FM = Father and Mother

O = Other

Source of income

E = Employed

B = Business person

CF = Commercial farmer

SF = Subsistence farmer

Guardians' Possessions

R = Radio C = Car

B = Bicycle

H = House with cement & iron roof

Support from guardians:

1 = adequate 2 = Barely adequate 3 = Inadequate

Table 26 In-school children Classrooms

Sample Size	Class venue		State of c/room		Have Desks		Desk condition			Class desk distrb. priority			Sch. desk distrb. Priority	
30	In-Door	Open air	Like	dislike	Yes	No	1	2	3	B	G	BG	Jnr. sect.	Snr. sect.
	30	0	25	5	25	5	19	3	1			30	0	18

Key:

Desk condition

1 = Very good

2 = Good

3 = Bad

Class desk distribution priority

B = Boys

G = Girls

BG = boys and Girls

Table 27 Classrooms

Reasons for liking/disliking classrooms			
Liking	Respo- ndents	Disliking	Respo- ndents
Good roof	2	Open windows-cold	1
New	10	Overcrowding	1
Warm	2	Dirty	1
Has desks	9	No desks	2

Table 28 Water and Sanitation

School	Source of water	Latrines		Latrine condition		
		Boys'	Girls'	Very good	Good	Bad
St. Michael's	Borehole	12	12		**	
Goleka	Borehole	24	32	**		
Mbombwe	Borehole	2	4			**
Matenjere	Borehole	4	5		**	
Lisao	Borehole	12	12	**		

Table 29 Introduction (Parents)

Sample Size	Ward's sex		Whose child		Marital status	
	M	F	Own	Other	S	M
19	15	4	13	5	7	12

Table 30 Socioeconomic information (Parents)

House made of				Possessions			Guardian education				Any ward who attended sec. sch.?			
BB	GB	GR	IR	Shoe	Radio	Bicycle	Std 0-1	Std 2-5	Std 6-8	Sec. & over	Yes	No	If yes	
													Problem	# of responses
3	14	14	3	9	8	5	6	4	6	2	8	11	Fees	6
													Pregnancy	1
													Truancy	2

KeyMarital status

S = Single

M = Married

House made of

BB = Burnt bricks

GB = Green bricks

GR = Grass roof

IR = Iron roof

Table 31 Child occupation (for parents)

Sample	Child attend. patient		Sponsor sick/dead?		Child h/capped?		Child delinquent ?		Alcohol & drugs?		Sexual-ly active?		Parental counseling			
19	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	E	S	A&D	GC
	3	16	8	11	3	16	1	18	1	18	2	17	18	10	14	2

Key: Y= yes N= no E= education S= Sex A&D= alcohol and drugs
GC= General conduct

Table 32 Summary question (Parents)

Lack clothes	Poverty	Laziness	Hunger	Physical handicap	Illness	Cruel teachers.	Orphanage
6	8	1	5	1	2	1	3

QUESTIONNAIRES AND AN INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Target population

1. Pupils (in standards 4, 5 and 6)
2. Children who dropped out of school (at standards 2, 3 and 4)
3. Parents of pupils who dropped out of sc

Introduction (of the questionnaire to respondents)

I am doing a study on why some pupils drop out of school while others do not. I am interested to learn how you live every day especially in relation to issues that are, in one way or the other, related to your school life. The information you give me will go a long way in my effort to understand the situation, establish possible causes of the problem and provide possible suggestions to the schools and the entire education system as to what can be done to make sure children remain in school to the last class.

I will first ask you specific questions and then I would like to have your general thoughts on the issue.

The information that you are going to give me will be treated very confidentially. It is not going to be identified with your name or yourself personally. It is not going to be used in any other way than explained above. As such, it is my sincere request that you give me the most accurate information you can, for the success of the study dwells very much on how realistic the information that I get from people like you will be.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR IN-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Objectives	Source	Questions
To find out distance from pupils' homes to school	Pupils	<p>Some pupils find it difficult to attend school because they live far away from school and have difficulties getting to and from school. Tell me your situation by answering the following questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The past week, what has been your main mode of transport to school? a) Walking b) by bicycle c) by bus/public transport d) by private car e) other (specify) 2. How long does it usually take you to travel to and school? a) less than 10 min. b) 10-20 min. c) 20- 30min. d) more than 30min. 3. Do you find it difficult to travel to and from school on a daily basis? a) yes b) no 4. If yes, what makes it difficult for you to travel to and from school?.....
To find out food and nutrition status of the pupils	Pupils	<p>Some children find it difficult to attend school because they are hungry. The following questions are trying to find out about your experience on the issue.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. During last week from Monday to Friday, how many days did you eat or drink anything before you went to school?..... 6. What did you usually eat before going to school last week?..... 7. During last week, what did you usually eat at school during break? 8. During last week between Monday and Friday how many times did you have meals per day? a) once b) twice c) three times 9. During school time, how often do you feel Hungry? a) always b) most of the time c) sometimes d) never 10. When at home, how often do you feel hungry? a) always b) most of the time c) sometimes d) never

<p>To find out about children's clothing problems</p>	<p>Pupils</p>	<p>Some children fail to go to school and sometimes end up leaving school because they do not have good clothes.</p> <p>11. During this term, how many days have you not had enough clothes to wear to school? a) less than 10days b) 10-20 days c) 20-30days d) more than 30 days</p> <p>13. Do you think the clothes you have are in good condition? a) yes b) no</p> <p>14. Do you have school uniform? a)yes b)no</p> <p>15. Do you think it would be good if schools required that children wear uniform? Why.....</p>
<p>To find out about availability and condition of infrastructure</p>	<p>Pupils</p>	<p>Many children have dropped out of school because they do not like the condition of the structures and facilities they use at school. Some schools may not even have these structures and facilities The following questions try to find out the situation at your school.</p> <p>16.Where do you usually get your lessons from? a) classroom b) under a tree c) shed d) other (specify).....</p> <p>17.If you use a classroom, do you like it? a) yes b) no</p> <p>18.If you don't like your classroom, what do you dislike about it?.....</p> <p>19. If you like the classroom, what do you like about it?.....</p> <p>20. Do you have desks in your classroom? a) yes b) no.</p> <p>21. If you have desks in your classroom, are they enough for everyone? a) yes b) no</p> <p>22. If the desks are not enough in your classroom, who gets priority to occupy them? a) girls b) boys e) boys and girls equally</p> <p>23.If the desks are not enough at the school, which classes get priority to use them</p>

To find out about water and sanitation	Pupils	<p>a) stds 1-5 b) stds 6-8 c) other (please state)</p> <p>24. Are the desks in good condition? a) very good b) good c) bad d) very bad</p> <p>Some schools may have no source for drinking water and latrines. This may be a source of discomfort to pupils such that some may persistently be absent from school or even drop out.</p> <p>25. When you are at school, where do you get drinking water from?.....</p> <p>26. If you can not get water at school, what do you do alternatively? a) go home b) bring water from home c) other (specify).....</p> <p>27. Do you have latrines at your school ? a) yes b) no</p> <p>28. If your school has latrines, how would you rate their condition? a) very good b) good c) bad d) very bad</p> <p>29. If there are latrines at your school, how many are for a) girls..... b) boys.....</p> <p>30. If you don't have them, what do you usually do alternatively when you need to go to a latrine? a) go to the bush b) go home c) go to surrounding peoples' latrines d) other (state)</p>
To find out about how teachers treat pupils	Pupils	<p>Children have sometimes left school because they feel their teachers are not treating them well while others have stayed in school because they feel kindly treated by their teachers.</p> <p>31. How do teachers usually treat you? a) very kindly b) kindly c) not kindly b) very unkindly</p> <p>32. In the past month, have you ever stayed from school in fear of teacher? a) yes b) no</p> <p>33. If yes in 4, can you tell me what happened?</p> <p>34. Do your teachers punish you or your classmates? a) yes b) no</p> <p>35. If they punish you or your classmates, what is the usual way in which they do so?.....</p>

<p>To find out about children's background</p>	<p>Pupils</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>36.How long do the punishments usually last?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>37.Since you came to this school, have you ever heard that a teacher proposed a school girl?</p> <p>a) yes b) no</p> <p>38. If yes in 28, how did the girl react? (check the applicable) a) she reported to the headteacher (b) she accept the proposals c) she quit school (d) she reported to parents (e) other (specify</p> <p>39.In the past week from Monday to Friday, how many lessons did you not have because the teacher did not come?.....</p> <p>40. In the past week, how many subjects did you get homework in ?.....</p> <p>how many were marked?.....</p> <p>41. What would you do if you failed end of year examinations ?</p> <p>a) repeat the class b) quit school c)transfer to another school d) proceed to the next class</p> <p>Some children come from homes and backgrounds that are conducive to pursuing school while others do not. The question that follow would like to find out your situation.</p> <p>42.Who do you live with and takes care of you? (check the applicable)</p> <p>a) father b) mother c)father and mother d) relative (specify)</p> <p>43.How does the person(s) you live with earn their living? (check the applicable) a) employed b)business person c) commercial farmer d) peasant</p> <p>44. For those of you who do not live with one or both parents, where is/are the (other) parent(s)? (check the applicable) a) died b)divorced c) live elsewhere d) not sure</p> <p>45. How much support do you get from the one(s) you live with for your education?</p> <p>a) very adequate b) adequate c) barely b) adequate d) not adequate e) no support</p> <p>46.Tick the things on the list that are found in the</p>
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General question	Pupils	<p>home in which you live ? a) a car b) television set c) telephone d) the house is built of burnt bricks and iron roof and cement floor</p> <p>47. What type of work do you do at home? (check the applicable) a) looking after young ones b)gardening c) piece work (ganyu) d) looking after the sick e) other (specify)..... </p> <p>48. Do you sometimes stay from school because you have to work? a) yes b) no</p> <p>49. If yes in 43, what type of work is likely to keep you from school?..... </p> <p>50.Which of the following would make you stay from or drop out of school? (check in order of importance) a) going to school having eaten nothing b) poor clothes c) lack of or poor classrooms d) unkind treatment by teachers e) teachers wanting to have sexual relations with you f) poor or no drinking water at school g) work that earns you some money h) poor or lack of latrines at school i) lack of desks in the classroom j) distance to school k) a man or woman that wants to marry you</p>
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Objective	Source	Questions
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To find out distance from school	Drop out children	<p>Some children find it difficult to go to school because the school they go to is far away from their home. I would like to find out from you how difficult it was to get to school and back.</p> <p>1. What is the name of your village?</p> <p>2. Name the nearest school to your village</p> <p>3. Is this the school you went to? a) yes b) no If no, why?.....</p> <p>4. How were you traveling to school? ? a) on foot b) by bicycle c) by public transport c) by private car</p> <p>5. On average how long did it take you to get to school? a) less than 10 mins. b) 10-20 mins. c) 20-30 mins. d) More than 30 mins.</p> <p>6. Did you find traveling to school difficult? a) yes b) no If yes, why?.....</p>
To find out the nutrition and health status of children	Drop out children	<p>Low nutrition and health status in children may sometimes affect their interest in schooling. Would you let me figure out your nutrition and health status before you dropped from school by answering the following questions.</p> <p>7. Before going to school, did you eat anything? a) yes b) no</p>

<p>To find out about clothing state of children</p>	<p>Drop out children</p>	<p>If yes, what did you eat?.....</p> <p>8. How often did you have anything to eat during break time? a) always b) sometimes c) not at all</p> <p>9. How many times did you have meals per day at home before you dropped school? a) less than once b) once c) twice d) three times</p> <p>10. Before you dropped out of school, what time did you feel hungry most? a) during school time b) after school hours c) both d) none</p> <p>11. When you were still in school, how often would you stay from school because of sickness? a) very often b) often c) sometimes d) not at all</p> <p>12. If you got sick, what sicknesses did you often have? a) malaria b) flue c) stomachache d) other (please specify).....</p> <p>13. What kind of treatment did you usually get when you got sick? a) traditional b) modern d) got no treatment</p> <p>Clothes are important to all people. If children do not have good and /or adequate clothes, they may not be able to go to school. Please tell me more about your clothes when you</p>
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<p>To find out about adequacy and condition of classrooms</p>	<p>Drop out children</p>	<p>were in school by answering the following questions.</p> <p>14. When you were still at school, would you sometimes be absent for school because you did not have clothes to put on? a) very often b) often c) not often d) not at all</p> <p>15. Did you ever feel bad about the state of your clothes when you were still at school? a) yes b) no</p> <p>16. Did any pupils laugh at their friends whose clothes were in bad state? a) yes b) no</p> <p>If yes, were you ever a victim of such a situation? a) yes b) no.</p> <p>17. Do you think it would be good if schools forced pupils to have uniform? a) yes b) no Why..... </p> <p>Sometimes children leave school because they do not like the conditions in which they learn. Tell me more about the last school you went to by answering the following questions.</p> <p>18. When you were still in school, where were you getting your lessons from?</p>
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<p>To find out about water and sanitation facilities</p>	<p>Drop out children</p>	<p>a) classroom b) under a tree c) grass shed d) other (specify).....</p> <p>19. Did you have desks and/or benches to sit and write on? a) yes b) no</p> <p>20. Did you find problems with where you got your lessons from? a) yes b) no If yes, explain.....</p> <p>Sometimes children may leave school because it does not have drinking water and toilets.</p> <p>21. When you were still at school, where were you getting drinking water from?</p> <p>22. If you could not get water at your school, what did you do for an alternative?</p> <p>23. Did you have latrines at your school? a) yes b) no</p> <p>24. If no, what did you do when you felt like visiting a latrine?.....</p>
<p>To find out how the children related with their teachers.</p>	<p>Drop out children</p>	<p>Children may sometimes quit school because they do not like the way their teachers treat them and help them with their learning.</p> <p>25. When you were still at school, how did teachers usually treat you? a) very kindly b) kindly</p>

	<p>(AIDS, counseling and premature pregs and marriages) and health</p>	<p>c) unkindly d) very unkindly</p> <p>26. When you were still at school, did you ever stay away from school because you were in fear of a teacher? a) yes b) no</p> <p>27. If yes in 23, explain one instance why you were afraid of the teacher.....</p> <p>28. Did your teachers punish you when you were wrong? a) yes b) no</p> <p>29. If yes in 25, what kind of punishment did you usually get?</p> <p>30. How long did the punishments last?.....</p> <p>31. Did your teachers advise you on the following issues? (tick the applicable) a) good conduct b) sex c) importance of education</p> <p>32. When you were in school, did your teachers engage in sexual abuse of pupils? a) yes b) no.</p> <p>33. If yes in 28, what was the usual result?</p> <p>34. Were your teachers absent for classes? a) very often b) often c) rarely d) not at all</p>
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To find out children's' background	Drop out children	<p>35. Did you have problems in understanding lessons? a) always b) sometimes c) not at all</p> <p>36. If you had problems understanding your lessons, did you get help from your teachers? a) always b) rarely c) not at all</p> <p>Children are likely to quit school if some conditions at home are not favorable. May you tell me more about your home by answering the questions that follow.</p> <p>37. Who do you live with and takes care of you at home? (check the applicable) a) mother b) father c) uncle d) other (please specify).....</p> <p>38. If you do not live with one or both parents, where are they? a) died b) divorced c) parents never married d) other (please specify).....</p> <p>39. How do the people who look after you earn their living? a) employed b) run a big business c) run a small business d) run a big farm e) have a small garden f) other (please specify).....</p> <p>40. Tick those things that the family you live with has. a) a house built of burnt bricks and iron roof and cement floor b) a radio</p>
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		<p>c) television set d) a car</p> <p>41. When you were still at school, how much support did you get from the one you stay with and/or supports you? a) very much b) much c) not much d) not at all</p> <p>42. What type of work do you do at home? (please tick the applicable) a) working in the family gardens b) looking after brothers and/or sisters c) household chores d) looking after a sick relative e) piece work (ganyu) f) other (please specify).....</p> <p>43. When you were still in school, did you have to stay from school to work a) very often b) often b) sometimes d) not at all</p> <p>44. What are you doing since you left school? (Tick the applicable) a) married b) employed c) doing business\ d) other (please specify).....</p> <p>45. What actually prompted you to leave school? (tick the applicable)</p> <p>l) going to school having eaten nothing m) poor clothes n) lack of or poor classrooms o) unkind treatment by teachers p) teachers wanting to have</p>
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		<p>sexual relations with you</p> <p>q) poor or no drinking water at school</p> <p>r) work that earns you some money</p> <p>s) poor or lack of latrines at school</p> <p>t) lack of desks in the classroom</p> <p>u) distance to school</p> <p>v) pregnancy</p> <p>w) marriage</p> <p>x) My parents died and I have to look after my younger brothers and /or sisters</p>
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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GUARDIANS WITH DROP OUT CHILDREN

OBJECTIVE	SOURCE	QUESTIONS
To find about particulars of the child and relationship to guardian	Guardians for drop out children	<p>1. Is there a child in your household who dropped out of school? a) yes b) no</p> <p>(If yes, go to 2., if no, dismiss respondent)</p> <p>2. The sex of the child is a) male b) female</p> <p>3. In which standard did he/she drop out?.....</p> <p>4. How old was the child when he/she left school?.....</p> <p>5. Which year did she/he leave school?.....</p> <p>6. Whose is this child? a) mine b) adopted c) my relative's (please specify relationship).....</p> <p>7.If the child is not your own, why is he/she not living with his/her parents?.....</p>
To find out about the socio-economic status of the guardian	The guardian	<p>8. How many people are there in your family? and how many go to school ?</p> <p>9. How do you earn your living? (please tick the applicable) a) employed b) run a big business/farm c) run a small business/garden d) other (please specify).....</p> <p>10. What is your house made of? (please tick the applicable)</p>

		<p>d) burnt bricks b) iron sheets c) cement floor d) mud/green e) brick wall f) thatched roof g) earth floor h) none of the above (please explain)..... </p> <p>11. What of these do you have in your household? a) radio e) telephone/cell phone c) television d) a car</p> <p>12. How many pairs of shoes do you have? a) none b) one b) two c)more than two</p> <p>13. How far did you go with education? a) never went to school b) up to standard 5 c) up to standard 8 d) up to secondary school</p> <p>14. By the time the child left school, did you have a relative who was critically ill? a) yes b) no)</p> <p>15. If yes, was the child involved in taking care of the sick person? a) yes b) no</p> <p>16. If yes, what time of the day was he/she looking after the sick? a) morning b)afternoon c) night d) all day long</p> <p>17. Is there any member of the family who went up to secondary school or above? a) yes b) no</p> <p>18. If yes, what are they doing? a) employed b) doing business c) just staying d) other (please explain)..... </p> <p>19. Did you find it challenging to send a child to school? a) yes b) no Explain..... </p> <p>20. Did the child eat anything before going to</p>
	The guardian	

<p>To find out about the nutrition and health status of the family</p>		<p>school? a) yes b) no</p> <p>21. How many meals per day does your family have? sometimes no meal b) one meal c) two meals d) three meals and above</p> <p>22. How do you source food for the family? a) on a yearly basis b) on a monthly basis c) on a weekly basis d) on a daily basis</p> <p>23. Did the child have persistent sicknesses that characterized his /her health? a) yes b) no If yes state the types of sicknesses.....</p>
<p>To find out about the child's general character</p>	<p>The guardian</p>	<p>24. Does the child have any physical disabilities a) yes b) no If yes do you think it affected his school life? Explain.....</p> <p>25. Has the child been involved in offences such as criminal? a) yes b) no If yes, please give one example.....</p> <p>26. At the time they left school, did you have an idea as to whether the child was involved with use of any of the following; a) alcohol b) marijuana c) other drug (please specify)..... d) none of the above</p> <p>27. How sexually active was the child when they left school? a) very active b) active c) not active d) not sure</p> <p>28. Which of the following did you counsel the child on? (check the applicable) a) school b) drug and alcohol use c) sex d) other (specify)..... e) none of the above</p> <p>29. In your understanding, why did the child leave school?.....</p>

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